JOHN UPDIKE'S JIHADI LIT

The Nation

THE NEW AMERICAN COLD WAR

by STEPHEN F. COHEN

JULY 10, 2006
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LETTERS

Letters

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

SECOND THAT EMOTION

Pittsburgh

■ Jackson Lears's splendid review of Martin Jay's book *Songs of Experience* ["Keeping It Real," June 12] demonstrates the absurdity of Richard Rorty's dogma that there is no experience unmediated by language. This logocentric proposition—which Rorty shares with many French thinkers—is unsupported by evidence. Infant researchers and developmental psychologists demonstrated the existence of pre-verbal experience experimentally in the 1980s, while psychoanalysts like Erich Fromm and R.D. Laing wrote persuasively in the 1960s about emotional experience inexpressible in language.

Lears is also amply justified in lamenting the eclipse of E.P. Thompson and Raymond Williams. Their current neglect speaks volumes about the intellectual avant-garde, whose verbal pyrotechnics impress other academics but bear almost no relationship to the lived experience and daily struggles of the masses. He should also be commended for posing the obvious question of whether there is some elusive link between (1) the poststructuralist courtship of violent death and the postmodern mass media's incessant simulations of it; and (2) the avant-garde's pursuit of shattering epiphanies and the popular culture of apocalypse. If the Rapture crowd and the avant-garde are brothers under the skin, it may be because popular "culture" and the academy are both inflected with necrophilia, which Fromm defined as a (largely unconscious) attraction to death and decay, and a corresponding aversion or hostility to life. Necrophilia in this sense is not a sexual perversion but a more encompassing and diffuse passion that may or may not seek an overtly sexual expression. Fromm contrasted the necrophilous orientation of late modern (and early postmodern) culture with the predominantly biophilous (life-loving) orientation he hoped to encourage through a renaissance of socialist humanism. Indeed, Fromm coined the term biophilia a full decade before E.O. Wilson took it up (without proper acknowledgment).

DANIEL BURSTON

MOTHERS: OVERWORKED, UNDERPAID

Oak Park, Calif.

■ Joan Blades and Kristin Rowe-Finkbeiner's "The Motherhood Manifesto" [May 22] hit close to home for my wife and me. As first-time parents, we took advantage of California's paid family leave. It requires employees first to use any accrued vacation and sick time and then to take one state-mandated week, unpaid, before benefits (about 40 percent of pay) kick in. So parents who may need paid sick time later in the year must take it unpaid. And with the vacation time gone, any downtime must wait until the following year.

In our case, due to a difficult pregnancy, my wife had already used her allotted sick days. She planned to take eight weeks of maternity leave (we could afford no more). Upon giving birth, she used her two weeks of accrued vacation time and the required unpaid week before the benefits began. Since we both could not afford to utilize paid family leave without falling into the dreaded "poverty spell," I used my accrued vacation time (two weeks) and then went back to work, leaving my wife alone with the exhausting task of caring for our newborn.

We get so angry when our so-called leaders crow about "family values." If they really gave a damn about the American family, they'd work for programs to allow parents to bond with their newborns without fear of ending up out on the street.

MICHAEL LASKAVY

Rutledge, Pa.

■ My heart went out to the young mother killing herself to get to work by 8 AM, as depicted in "The Motherhood Manifesto." It doesn't have to be that way. I work for a small publishing company that not only allows starting flextime from 6:30 to 9:30 AM—parents or not—but also allows work at home two days a week. Productivity has soared dramatically under this policy. It doesn't matter where the work gets done, but it does matter a great deal to parents whose children are sick or on a school holiday to be able to stay home with them without having to take time off; it matters to employees who need to stay home for the plumber or a furniture delivery to be able to keep right on working while they're waiting; and it matters to an employee who can schedule a doctor's appointment at the beginning or end of the day without having to take a sick day. Employers should not be afraid to try telecommuting, flextime and other family-friendly innovations. The vast majority of employees, including millions of struggling working mothers, will reward employers with much greater productivity.

J. MAYBERRY

Sunnyvale, Calif.

■ "The Motherhood Manifesto" reasonably asks why flextime isn't an option. Unfortunately, state and federal laws to "protect" workers make it nearly impossible to offer flexible working hours. Requirements for overtime pay after eight hours per day and/or over forty hours per week make it difficult or expensive to offer this reasonable (and desirable) flexibility.

When the company I worked for wanted to offer an alternate schedule (nine hours Monday to Thursday, eight hours on alternate Fridays, with every other Friday off), we had to jump through incredible hoops, including a vote by all hourly workers (about 2 percent of the company). Then we had to "adjust" the normal workweek to start on Friday at noon so that it didn't exceed forty hours! This is clearly nonsense.

ART SAVILLE

Manama, Bahrain

■ We are supposed to be leaders in human rights and a land of equal opportunity, right? So why are our mothers being left behind? Why don't more women work together to find solutions to the problems outlined in your article? They're too exhausted and afraid of losing their jobs!

AUGUSTA CHERRI

Fremont, Calif.

■ While I agree that working parents have a lot to deal with, I am prochoice. Thus, I believe that when one has children, it should be by choice, and the choice should be made with knowledge of the ramifications of childrearing.

RACHEL ARTEAGA

Aspen, Colo.

■ When my children were small I worked thirteen hours a day, seven days a week at home, and as they grew older my family workload never went below twenty-nine hours a week. In addition, I did forty hours a week of paid work. My pay, of course, was below the male average and my family work was never deemed to have monetary value, although feminists at the time figured I could be replaced for no less than $30,000 per year. As a consequence, my Social Security check is $411 per month.

To say this is shameful for a country that can lavish funds on perpetual war, killing those children I raised for free, is an understatement. It is criminal.

I'd be happy to see Mother's Day restored to its original purpose: opposition to war. Add to that, opposition to the throwaway value of family work. It's important to see how this is built in to our type of capitalism. So often women's position is portrayed as "choice" rather than the systemic nature of what we face.

MABEL MACDONALD

DON'T CALL US MERCENARIES!

Washington, DC

■ The accountability, transparency and regulation of private contractors is clearly of concern to the American people and Congress. Though we agree with some of Jeremy Scahill's sentiments in "In the Black(water)" [June 5], we are concerned about his characterization of the industry and his colored descriptions of our

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EDITORIALS

Moving Toward the Exit

It's an election year, so White House political czar Karl Rove and his Congressional errand boys are up to their usual tricks. But this year there are signs that at least some top Democrats won't be playing Rove's game.

When House Republican leaders responded to bipartisan calls for an honest debate on the Iraq occupation with a resolution endorsing the Administration's failed strategies and rejecting a timeline for withdrawal from a war that had that very day cost the 2,500th American life, House minority leader Nancy Pelosi countered with something Rove wasn't expecting: outspoken opposition.

"Stay the course? I don't think so, Mr. President. It's time to face the facts," Pelosi told the House. "This war is a failed policy of the Bush Administration.... We need a new direction in Iraq." Echoing the sentiments of the overwhelming majority of Americans, the minority leader thundered, "The war in Iraq has been a mistake—a grotesque mistake."

Pelosi, who became minority leader in part because she voted in 2002 against authorizing Bush to attack Iraq but who has since taken hits from the Out of Iraq Caucus for adopting a cautious approach, did more than just serve up the right rhetoric. She led a huge majority of Democrats in voting against the resolution. Even members like minority whip Steny Hoyer and Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee chair Rahm Emanuel, who have sided with the White House in the past, voted no. Ultimately, the resolution passed, 256 to 153, a disappointing result but still the biggest Democratic break so far from the Administration's line on the war.

Pelosi's strong statement and the willingness of most Democrats to cast what they knew would be seen as an antiwar vote signal an election-year shift in the right direction. House Democrats are starting to talk seriously about the war, calling it the mistake most Americans know it to be and embracing the discussion of withdrawal most Americans know must take place if there is to be any hope of ending the killing in Iraq and restoring some sanity to US foreign policy.

The news is not so good from the Senate, where minority leader Harry Reid has yet to speak with the clarity or force of Pelosi. But despite Reid's caution there are encouraging signals. John Kerry, having failed to come out against the war as the Democratic presidential nominee in 2004, is now doing so. Kerry joined two of the Senate's most consistent critics of the war, Russ Feingold and Barbara Boxer, to offer an amendment to the Defense Authorization bill, setting a July 1, 2007, deadline for redeployment of US troops out of Iraq. Most Democrats were expected to vote instead for a weaker measure calling only for the start of troop redeployment by year's end. But Kerry's joining Feingold to back a timeline is significant. It lends legitimacy to the discussion of setting an exit strategy. And the more that high-profile Democrats with presidential ambitions embrace an antiwar position, the more untenable it will be for cautious Democratic senators like New York's Hillary Clinton to straddle the fence on the most fundamental issue of the 2006 Congressional elections—and, potentially, of the 2008 presidential election.

The Democrats are not yet articulating an antiwar position that will clearly distinguish them as the opposition party polls show Americans want. But at least some party leaders have begun to adopt the necessary stance. And for all the GOP's spin-machine bluster, nothing frightens Karl Rove and the Republican team more. Americans know it is time to end the US presence in Iraq, and they will reward the party that offers a plan for leaving before another 2,500 Americans—and countless Iraqis—are killed.

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COMMENT

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Party of a Different Color

"Vote Blue, Go Green" is the new slogan of Great Britain's Conservative Party, unveiled in April before local elections that saw the Tories gain ground on Prime Minister Tony Blair's beleaguered Labour Party. Linking the Conservatives' traditional color, blue, with the green of environmentalism reinforced a message that David Cameron, the 39-year-old Conservative Party leader, has been stressing since he was chosen this past fall as the Tories' new standard bearer: This is not the Conservative Party of old.

In one of his first official acts as party leader—facing off against Blair during Question Time in the House of Commons—Cameron chose to echo complaints by Britain's environmental groups that Blair talks much but does little about climate change. (Blair, who once called the Kyoto Protocol "not radical enough," has pledged to reduce Britain's greenhouse gas emissions 20 percent by 2010, but his government now admits it will fall short of that goal.) Ben Bradshaw, the Labour Party's environment minister, fired back at Cameron, charging that the Tories have made "no clear commitments on climate change" and "need to set out new policies, not platitudes."

"David Cameron is trying to out-Blair Blair," says Sir David King, chief scientific adviser to the British government. King, whose warning in 2004 that climate change poses a threat more serious than terrorism helped fuel public concern in Britain and beyond, adds, "Cameron is repositioning the Conservatives to capture the middle ground, and there is no question he sees the middle ground as dealing with climate change."

Whether Cameron's rhetorical repositioning will be matched by real policy shifts remains to be seen. But a greening of the Conservatives would mirror a broader trend in Northern Europe, where the right-of-center parties governing Germany, France, Denmark and the Netherlands all support firm action against climate change. Germany and Denmark boast two of the world's most extensive programs of alternative-energy development, especially from wind power. The Netherlands is already preparing a national plan to adapt to the rising sea levels and increased flooding that climate change is projected to cause in years to come. France played an essential behind-the-scenes role at the 2005 G-8 summit, blocking the Bush Administration from watering down the final agreement's declaration that the science is no longer disputable.

The climate change debate in Europe is much less politicized than in the United States, and there is wide consensus that impacts are already being felt—for example, in the disastrous flooding of the Elbe and Danube rivers in 2002 and the heat wave that killed an estimated 31,000 people in France, Spain and Italy in 2003. Public concern has grown so strong among elites and ordinary citizens that political parties have little choice but to respond. Britain's Conservatives saw they had to develop their own position because they recognized that Britons "are going to hear about climate change every week for the foreseeable future," explains James Cameron (no relation to David), vice chair of Climate Change Capital, a London-based financial company

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that invests in emission reductions worldwide. Just as Republicans in California cannot get elected if they are seen as weak on the environment, so conservatives in Northern Europe must at least look green if they hope to govern.

The British Conservative Party has "a massive image problem," says James Morris, a pollster who ran focus groups for the Labour Party before the last general election, in 2005. "They are seen as uncaring, old, nasty and out of touch. So they need to rebrand themselves...[by] picking a symbolic issue, the environment, to shift how people think about the Tory Party in the long term."

Peter Ainsworth, the Conservative Party's shadow secretary of state for the environment, denies that "Vote Blue, Go Green" is merely a ploy. "The emphasis on environmental issues comes as a result of the growing awareness that we may be living on borrowed time, and we're addressing that as any responsible party should. If it is electorally advantageous, that is good," says Ainsworth. He adds that it is "difficult to say" how this green messaging affected the May elections: "The Labour Party had a series of difficulties leading up to the elections [including a sex scandal and the unpopularity of the Iraq War], and no doubt we were helped by the government's own misdemeanors." But the Tories' advance was not simply a function of voters' distaste for Labour, Ainsworth argues, for the Tories gained more than four times as many seats as Liberal Democrats. By mid-May a poll by the *Guardian* and the research firm ICM found that support for the Tories had risen to 38 percent, the party's highest rating in thirteen years, as female voters in particular voiced increased support. Labour, meanwhile, polled 34 percent and the Liberal Democrats 20 percent.

There have been some glitches in the Conservatives' new embrace of green consciousness. Cameron was photographed bicycling to the House of Commons one morning like a good green commuter, but trailing him was his government car—an unfortunate necessity, he later explained, because of the heavy boxes of paperwork he has to carry. And Ainsworth concedes that "the substance isn't there yet" on green issues. Still, he pledges that the Tories will announce a comprehensive program by year's end, following a policy review overseen by John Gummer, former environment minister and Kyoto Protocol negotiator, and Zac Goldsmith, editor of *Ecologist*, a British environmental magazine. "We are looking for all the ways we can find—using tax, regulation, incentives and above all the market—to encourage green behavior and discourage nongreen behavior," says Ainsworth.

Saleemul Huq, head of the Climate Change Group of the International Institute for Environment and Development in London, says that Cameron's motives for greening the Tories are unimportant. "I don't care," says Huq, a leading activist on climate and poverty issues. "Cameron is reading the writing on the wall. He sees this is where the votes are. He's not leading; he's following. I want all politicians to do that." MARK HERTSGAARD

Mark Hertsgaard, The Nation*'s environment correspondent, is the author, most recently, of* Earth Odyssey: Around the World in Search of Our Environmental Future *and* The Eagle's Shadow: Why America Fascinates and Infuriates the World. *He is a fellow of The Nation Institute.*

The People Versus AIDS

At a historic UNGASS (UN General Assembly special session) in 2001, Kofi Annan declared war on AIDS. He did not intend this war to become permanent, for the "fight against AIDS" to become a fixture of global politics. Deadlines were set: universal access to treatment by 2010, a reversal of the epidemic by 2015. In early June, five years after UNGASS and twenty-five years after the first reported cases of the disease, world leaders reconvened to assess the state of this war, and despite significant progress in funding and treatment, many concluded that the UN's benchmark goals are quickly moving out of reach. "The epidemic that has inflicted the single greatest reversal in the history of human development...continues to outpace us," warned Annan at the close of UNGASS+5.

Yet there is some reason for optimism. Five years ago there was little internationally coordinated funding for AIDS, no alphabet soup of agencies dedicated to fighting it—no US PEPFAR (President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief), no WHO 3x5 (the World Health Organization's plan to treat 3 million people by 2005), no Global Fund. Big Pharma fiercely resisted price discounting and generic production of antiretrovirals; trade officials in wealthy nations agreed and also helped to stymie much-needed debt relief. In short, whole swaths of the developing world were left for dead.

This is no longer the case. Last year the world spent $8.3 billion on HIV/AIDS, up from a paltry $1.2 billion in 2000. The G-8 members have pledged $38 billion in debt relief to seventeen poor nations. These steps have produced results on the ground: WHO has put 1.3 million new people on life-saving medications at prices once thought impossible, and after the IMF canceled $5 billion of Zambia's debt, President Levy Mwanawasa announced free basic healthcare for all citizens.

Beyond measurable accomplishments such as these, increased funding and attention have fueled and emboldened the global people's movement against AIDS. A growing corps of civil society organizations now monitor, heckle and cajole governments and international AIDS organizations. Inside the halls of the UN they, along with the Rio Group of countries led by Brazil, led the call for firm treatment targets and the specific mention of "vulnerable populations" (men who have sex with men, sex workers and IV drug users) in the final declaration—though their proposals were ultimately blocked by delegations including the United States, the Organization of the Islamic Council and South Africa.

Still, these activists and NGOs face a daunting task. Though UNAIDS estimates that $23 billion (almost triple current funding levels) will be needed annually by 2010, UNGASS+5 set no firm targets for funding or treatment. The Global Fund, which subsidizes almost half of all AIDS treatment to people in the developing world, recently announced its sixth round of grants but lacks the money to fund them. The WHO and UNAIDS have yet to launch a successor to 3x5, which failed to reach its ambitious goal. Moreover, according to WHO's own evaluation, those who received treatment did so through exist-

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ing hospitals and clinics that are now "saturated." Without a massive and immediate increase in funding—not just to purchase more medicine but to build the healthcare infrastructure necessary to reach more marginal populations—the promise of universal access will become "a cruel joke for people living with HIV and AIDS," according to the International Treatment Preparedness Coalition.

Bush's AIDS plan is a particularly thorny gift. Widely touted as having quadrupled US AIDS funding from Clinton Administration levels, it nonetheless circumvents the multilateral Global Fund, an imperfect but more transparent and accountable body. Moreover, according to a recent GAO audit PEPFAR's emphasis on abstinence hampers the ability of grantees to "respond to local prevention needs," and nine countries have decreased funding for mother-to-child transmission programs to meet abstinence promotion requirements. So onerous are these and other US dictates against prostitution and abortion that many African activists at UNGASS+5 expressed envy at the ability of Brazil—a relatively wealthy nation—to decline US AIDS funding altogether.

At the moment, such independence is impossible for AIDS groups from poor nations who depend on the vital treatment dollars attached to PEPFAR. "A work of mercy" is how Bush introduced his AIDS plan in 2003. But the UNGASS review made clear that what people with AIDS need now—besides more money, more doctors, more nurses and more drugs—is not mercy but power. It was, after all, the militancy of groups like ACT UP and South Africa's Treatment Action Campaign, which exposed the injustice of government neglect of people with AIDS, that placed treatment on the agenda to begin with—not UNGASS or the noblesse oblige of the powerful who signed the declaration that emerged from it. And if the world is to meet the goal of universal access by 2010, it will be because of the continued militancy of activists who hold world leaders accountable for ending, and winning, the war on AIDS. RICHARD KIM

Richard Kim teaches in the American studies department at Skidmore College.

CALVIN TRILLIN

SOME PERSPECTIVE

We're making progress in Iraq. Bush sings, "Tra-la-la-la, we
Have killed Al Qaeda in Iraq's most vicious thug, Zarqawi."
Some skeptics, though, insist on giving this a different twist:
Before this war, Al Qaeda in Iraq did not exist.

Cheney and HAL

Amid all his other troubles, Vice President Richard Cheney is now stalked by a ghost from his past—the Richard Cheney who for five years was CEO of the Halliburton Company. When he left Halliburton in 2000 to become George W. Bush's running mate, the Republican ticket was touted as two tough-minded business executives running against wimpish politicians. "The American people should be pleased they have a vice presidential nominee who has been successful in business," Karen Hughes, Bush's then–communications director, enthused.

A rather different story is told by a class-action investor lawsuit against Halliburton, recently revived after languishing for four years. It describes Cheney as not much different from other corporate titans ensnared by accusations of fraud. Brushing aside facts and subordinates' warnings, CEO Cheney made a series of daring but wrong decisions that were disastrous for the company. The managerial incompetence was compounded by fraudulent accounting gimmicks that concealed the company's true condition. Cheney, however, relentlessly issued bullish assurances, hiding the losses and pumping up the stock price.

Eventually, the truth caught up with the company—its stock tanked—but Cheney was already off to Washington, $40 million richer and running the country. He sold his shares at the top. HAL, the Halliburton stock symbol, began falling a few months after his resignation, from $53 to an eventual low of $8. By then Bush/Cheney were rolling out another bold venture—the invasion of Iraq.

A pity voters didn't know this side of the story back in 2000. Cheney's performance as CEO predicted his subsequent behavior as Veep: the willful ignorance and bullying manipulation of policy, the arrogance that led the country into deep trouble. The corporate scandal seems like old news now, since the basic facts were first revealed four years ago by the *New York Times*—generating a flurry of investor lawsuits. But the story has new life. The injured investors are now represented by William Lerach, the ferociously successful plaintiff lawyer who has won billions in securities litigation against major corporations and Wall Street banks, from Enron to Citigroup.

Lerach has reformulated the Halliburton complaint to pointedly portray Cheney and "Cheney's team" as the wrongdoers who fabricated and deceived. Cheney himself is not named as a defendant, but he faces a different kind of exposure—grilling under oath by Lerach, a tenacious trial lawyer deeply loathed by corporate and financial interests. (Full disclosure: Lerach's current firm was among the sponsors of a conference I addressed earlier this year.) "There's not any question we will get to that point," Lerach says with relish. "We can't know whether it will be three months or three years from now, but we know Cheney and Halliburton will fight furiously to keep Cheney from being deposed."

Lerach might ask Cheney, for instance, about the weird bookkeeping HAL adopted in 1998—a change that converted unpaid bills into revenue. The oil industry was in the low-price doldrums of the 1990s, and Halliburton bid low to win huge fixed-price contracts on massive construction projects. But these projects

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predictably produced huge cost overruns, and customers refused to pay for them. Without bothering to inform shareholders, HAL solved the problem by booking these unpaid claims as "revenue," wishful thinking that boosted profits and the stock price.

Lerach could also ask Cheney why he lowballed the losses HAL faced from burgeoning asbestos lawsuits. Cheney personally negotiated the purchase of Dresser Industries—the deal was closed on a quail-hunting expedition—but he neglected to account for the enormous asbestos liabilities Halliburton would inherit. Cheney's company reported a trivial exposure of $23 million, worst case $60 million. The right number was $4.4 billion. Or what about the $180 million in "improper/illegal payments" in Nigeria to win a contract to build a liquid natural-gas plant? Bribing a foreign government to win business is against US law. "There was an awful lot of chicanery and dishonesty at the top of that company when Cheney was CEO," Lerach observes. "It is fair to ask, If Cheney didn't know, why didn't he know? What was his salary for?" Lerach even asserts that Cheney knew he was in trouble at Halliburton and sought the vice presidency to exit before messy facts became known. Lerach has filed a motion to insure that the discovery process is kept open for public scrutiny.

The case is legal hardball at a very high level and has accumulated numerous oddities along the way. Why was Cheney not named as a defendant while other Halliburton executives were? The original lawyers decline to explain, but others surmise that, as a matter of strategy, naming Cheney would have lowered the odds of success. As a sitting Vice President in time of war, Cheney was riding high on war fervor. He might have fought subpoenas all the way to the Supreme Court. In any case, the statute of limitations now prevents his inclusion. Another oddity is how quickly the original plaintiff lawyers, Schiffrin & Barroway, rushed to settle the case for a meager sum. They negotiated a settlement of $6 million when the victimized investors, including many pension funds, had lost an estimated $3.1 billion. For no obvious reason, Richard Schiffrin also met privately with Cheney's personal lawyer, even though Cheney was not part of the case.

The settlement was delayed when the presiding federal judge had to withdraw, belatedly revealing that his children owned Halliburton stock. His replacement, Judge Barbara Lynn, observed sharply that the lawyers would collect a third of the $6 million settlement. Thousands of injured investors would get pennies.

By the summer of 2004 the accumulated oddities provoked an uproar in the courtroom. One lead plaintiff, the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, protested that its lawyers had been kept in the dark while the settlement was negotiated and that the outcome fell far short of a just amount. Schiffrin found himself before Judge Lynn, arguing the weakness of his clients' claim. "What made your case so bad so fast?" she asked him. "That's what I don't understand.... I find this proceeding peculiar because...all the sudden the great case becomes positively rank."

The judge tossed out the settlement. This could hardly harm aggrieved investors, she explained, since they weren't getting much anyway. That decision set the stage for Lerach's firm to take control of the case and to push the claims much more ambitiously.

Trial lawyers like Lerach have an obvious incentive to create well-publicized cases. Damaging revelations turn up the heat of public opinion and push defendants toward settling for bigger dollars. Halliburton says it intends to defend "vigorously" and dismisses Lerach's accusations as meritless—but that's what defendants usually say at this point.

Lerach has an additional motive. A high-profile case against the Veep could help protect him against retribution by Congress. The US Chamber of Congress and financial forces are building bipartisan support for another legislative assault on trial lawyers in financial cases, crippling the ability of pension funds, universities and foundations to win redress. Lerach is the prime target. And his former firm, Milberg Weiss, is under indictment for allegedly paying clients to act as lead plaintiffs in class-action suits.

Halliburton, meanwhile, is back on top. HAL soared on booming oil prices to $82 (before dropping back a bit), helped by the notorious no-bid contracts to rebuild war-ravaged Iraq. Cheney, one might say, did his part. War and rumors of war in the Middle East produce rising oil prices. Noncompetitive contracts eliminate the problem of cost overruns, since US taxpayers will pick up the tab. It seems the era of corporate corruption did not end with Enron, WorldCom and the other scandals. It relocated to Washington.

WILLIAM GREIDER

In Fact . . .

HOLD THE PHONE COMPANIES

■ *Nation* contributing editor Marc Cooper is involved in a lawsuit—the good kind. He's one of the journalistic plaintiffs (Robert Scheer is another) in a suit brought by the California ACLU against AT&T and Verizon. The suit charges that divulging private consumer records to NSA data-miners violates the California Constitution's privacy provisions and the state's privacy act, which prohibits telephone companies from providing information about customers' calling patterns except with their consent or in response to a court order. Twenty other ACLU chapters have raised similar complaints in their states.

AUTHOR, AUTHOR

■ Calvin Trillin, *The Nation*'s Deadline Poet, has a new book out, *A Heckuva Job: More of the Bush Administration in Rhyme*. It's a collection of his weekly poems, mainly from this publication—a sequel to his earlier *Obliviously On He Sails*, which made the *New York Times* bestseller list. *Nation* columnist and *Guardian* correspondent Gary Younge also has a new book of collected writings out. The title tells it all: *Stranger in a Strange Land: Encounters in the Disunited States*.

ON THE WEB

■ Dave Zirin examines the militaristic mindset of Team America at the World Cup. Nicholas von Hoffman writes that while the United States is making no headway on rebuilding Iraq, one secret project is on track: a sumptuous American Embassy to house 8,000 employees. John Nichols reports on the media policy fight of the year—now under way at the FCC—over whether consolidation will be allowed to accelerate.

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ERIC ALTERMAN

The Uses and Abuses of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi

Who was Abu Musab al-Zarqawi? Well, he was a really bad guy, no doubt, who beheaded innocent victims on videotape and did his damnedest to foment a kind of holy hell in Iraq through the promotion of sectarian violence. Beyond that, however, the issue gets a bit more complicated.

For instance, in the President's now-infamous October 7, 2002, speech in Cincinnati, Bush did not mention Zarqawi's name but said that "Al Qaeda leaders who fled Afghanistan went to Iraq. These include one very senior Al Qaeda leader who received medical treatment in Baghdad this year, and who has been associated with planning for chemical and biological attacks." When Colin Powell spoke at the United Nations on February 5, 2003, he did say that Zarqawi's group, Ansar al-Islam, operated "in northern Kurdish areas outside Saddam Hussein–controlled Iraq" before mentioning the medical treatment. Based on this flimsy premise, Powell spun out roughly 1,000 words detailing the dangers Zarqawi posed.

Soon enough, however, the distinction between Saddam-controlled Iraq and Kurdish-controlled Iraq, where Zarqawi did his dastardly deeds, began to disappear. On one Sunday in November 2003, Donald Rumsfeld used Ansar's prewar activities in Iraq to help justify the invasion on three separate Sunday shows; none of his tough-minded questioners—including Tony Snow, George Will, George Stephanopoulos and Tim Russert—thought to correct him.

Having served its polemical purpose, as Matthew Yglesias pointed out in a "Think Again" column for the Center for American Progress, Zarqawi's group largely disappeared from the Administration's propaganda campaign until a March 2003 raid produced another surge of media coverage, which focused heavily on the group's work on chemical weapons and its ties to Al Qaeda, while neglecting to note its lack of connection to Saddam's Iraq. Again Americans were treated to discussions of Ansar's prewar existence in Iraq without the key qualification—with Paul Bremer and Condoleezza Rice on different installments of *Fox News Sunday* and ABC's *This Week With George Stephanopoulos*—with no challenges from the hosts. Dick Cheney took the offensive further with Tim Russert on September 14 of that year, stating that "we also knew Al Qaeda was there, and Ansar al-Islam, up in northeastern Iraq." Bush, too, complained of "a man who is still running loose, involved with the poisons network, involved with Ansar al-Islam," adding, "There's no question that Saddam Hussein had Al Qaeda ties." No question, but not much evidence, either.

In March 2004 we learned the shocking news from NBC's Jim Miklaszewski that Bush & Co. never really took Zarqawi all that seriously. On several occasions before the invasion began, Bush chose to ignore opportunities to kill Zarqawi and wipe out his operations. The Administration apparently preferred to leave him in place, as he was serving a useful purpose in their propaganda campaigns.

This fundamental contradiction—some might say criminal negligence—did make its way into some of the coverage of the Administration's capture and killing of Zarqawi, but almost always as a sidebar or an aside to the less complicated story of good triumphing over evil. The *Washington Post*'s Karen DeYoung and Walter Pincus noted continually contradictory messages in the Administration's claims regarding Zarqawi. One day he was a murderous mastermind; the next, a pathetic poseur. Christopher Dickey in *Newsweek* noted some of these same difficulties and raised the possibility that Zarqawi's death will allow Iraqi rebels to "grow in political power and military strength." Also in *Newsweek*, Rod Nordland and Michael Hirsh pointed out the "cutting irony that the Bush Administration once thrust Zarqawi forward as a prewar link between Iraq and Al Qaeda. It was never clear that he ever had any ties to Saddam—and yet after the war, the terror leader became what he was once trumped up to be: Al Qaeda's man in Iraq. He made Iraq far more deadly for US soldiers and played a greater role than anyone else in turning the country into what George W. Bush called the 'central front' in the war on terror." Finally, Mary Anne Weaver's precipitously published profile in *The Atlantic Monthly*, based on reporting from Zarqawi's home country of Jordan among the people who knew him best—its intelligence services—exploded one myth after another. Weaver quoted one spy who explained, "'The Americans have been patently stupid in all of this. They've blown Zarqawi so out of proportion that, of course, his prestige has grown. And as a result, sleeper cells from all over Europe are coming to join him now.' He paused for a moment, then said, 'Your government is creating a self-fulfilling prophecy.'"

Unfortunately, none of these details mattered on talk radio, cable TV or in most print stories devoted to Zarqawi's death. The belated capture by US troops was viewed in most debate as one part of a winning week for the White House, together with Karl Rove escaping indictment in the Plame affair.

A special place in pundit purgatory might be reserved for armchair warriors Christopher Hitchens and William Kristol, who took the opportunity to attempt to score a rhetorical victory over the war's opponents. Hitchens crowed, "If we had withdrawn from Iraq already, as the 'peace' movement has been demanding, then one of the most revolting criminals of all time would have been able to claim that he forced us to do it"; while Kristol wrote, "One might also pause to point out that if we had followed the advice of those who want to pull out from Iraq, Abu Musab al Zarqawi would today be alive and well, and triumphant."

In fact, had it been up to most of us who had the good sense to oppose the war, Zarqawi would have been taken out long before the Administration was able to use him as a tool for its campaign for war; and tens of thousands of innocent people, including 2,500 American soldiers, would still be alive to tell Bush, Cheney, Hitchens, Kristol and their comrades just how they felt about being asked to die for a lie. ■

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ARTICLES

THE NEW AMERICAN COLD WAR

STEPHEN F. COHEN

Contrary to established opinion, the gravest threats to America's national security are still in Russia. They derive from an unprecedented development that most US policymakers have recklessly disregarded, as evidenced by the undeclared cold war Washington has waged, under both parties, against post-Communist Russia during the past fifteen years.

As a result of the Soviet breakup in 1991, Russia, a state bearing every nuclear and other device of mass destruction, virtually collapsed. During the 1990s its essential infrastructures—political, economic and social—disintegrated. Moscow's hold on its vast territories was weakened by separatism, official corruption and Mafia-like crime. The worst peacetime depression in modern history brought economic losses more than twice those suffered in World War II. GDP plummeted by nearly half and capital investment by 80 percent. Most Russians were thrown into poverty. Death rates soared and the population shrank. And in August 1998, the financial system imploded.

No one in authority anywhere had ever foreseen that one of the twentieth century's two superpowers would plunge, along with its arsenals of destruction, into such catastrophic circumstances. Even today, we cannot be sure what Russia's collapse might mean for the rest of the world.

Outwardly, the nation may now seem to have recovered. Its economy has grown on average by 6 to 7 percent annually since 1999, its stock-market index increased last year by 83 percent and its gold and foreign currency reserves are the world's fifth largest. Moscow is booming with new construction, frenzied consumption of Western luxury goods and fifty-six large casinos. Some of this wealth has trickled down to the provinces and middle and lower classes, whose income has been rising. But these advances, loudly touted by the Russian government and Western investment-fund promoters, are due largely to high world prices for the country's oil and gas and stand out only in comparison with the wasteland of 1998.

More fundamental realities indicate that Russia remains in an unprecedented state of peacetime demodernization and depopulation. Investment in the economy and other basic infrastructures remains barely a third of the 1990 level. Some two-thirds of Russians still live below or very near the poverty line, including 80 percent of families with two or more children, 60 percent of rural citizens and large segments of the educated and professional classes, among them teachers, doctors and military officers. The gap between the poor and the rich, Russian experts tell us, is becoming "explosive."

Most tragic and telling, the nation continues to suffer wartime death and birth rates, its population declining by 700,000 or more every year. Male life expectancy is barely 59 years and, at the other end of the life cycle, 2 to 3 million children are homeless. Old and new diseases, from tuberculosis to HIV infections, have grown into epidemics. Nationalists may exaggerate in charging that "the Motherland is dying," but even the head of Moscow's most pro-Western university warns that Russia remains in "extremely deep crisis."

The stability of the political regime atop this bleak post-Soviet landscape rests heavily, if not entirely, on the personal popularity and authority of one man, President Vladimir Putin, who admits the state "is not yet completely stable." While Putin's ratings are an extraordinary 70 to 75 percent positive, political institutions and would-be leaders below him have almost no public support.

The top business and administrative elites, having rapaciously "privatized" the Soviet state's richest assets in the 1990s, are particularly despised. Indeed, their possession of that property, because it lacks popular legitimacy, remains a time bomb embedded in the political and economic system. The huge military is equally unstable, its ranks torn by a lack of funds, abuses of authority and discontent. No wonder serious analysts worry that one or more sudden developments—a sharp fall in world

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oil prices, more major episodes of ethnic violence or terrorism, or Putin's disappearance—might plunge Russia into an even worse crisis. Pointing to the disorder spreading from Chechnya through the country's southern rim, for example, the eminent scholar Peter Reddaway even asks "whether Russia is stable enough to hold together."

As long as catastrophic possibilities exist in that nation, so do the unprecedented threats to US and international security. Experts differ as to which danger is the gravest—proliferation of Russia's enormous stockpile of nuclear, chemical and biological materials; ill-maintained nuclear reactors on land and on decommissioned submarines; an impaired early-warning system controlling missiles on hair-trigger alert; or the first-ever civil war in a shattered superpower, the terror-ridden Chechen conflict. But no one should doubt that together they constitute a much greater constant threat than any the United States faced during the Soviet era.

Nor is a catastrophe involving weapons of mass destruction the only danger in what remains the world's largest territorial country. Nearly a quarter of the planet's people live on Russia's borders, among them conflicting ethnic and religious groups. Any instability in Russia could easily spread to a crucial and exceedingly volatile part of the world.

There is another, perhaps more likely, possibility. Petrodollars may bring Russia long-term stability, but on the basis of growing authoritarianism and xenophobic nationalism. Those ominous factors derive primarily not from Russia's lost superpower status (or Putin's KGB background), as the US press regularly misinforms readers, but from so many lost and damaged lives at home since 1991. Often called the "Weimar scenario," this outcome probably would not be truly fascist, but it would be a Russia possessing weapons of mass destruction and large proportions of the world's oil and natural gas, even more hostile to the West than was its Soviet predecessor.

How has the US government responded to these unprecedented perils? It doesn't require a degree in international relations or media punditry to understand that the first principle of policy toward post-Communist Russia must follow the Hippocratic injunction: Do no harm! Do nothing to undermine its fragile stability, nothing to dissuade the Kremlin from giving first priority to repairing the nation's crumbling infrastructures, nothing to cause it to rely more heavily on its stockpiles of superpower weapons instead of reducing them, nothing to make Moscow uncooperative with the West in those joint pursuits. Everything else in that savaged country is of far less consequence.

Since the early 1990s Washington has simultaneously conducted, under Democrats and Republicans, two fundamentally different policies toward post-Soviet Russia—one decorative and outwardly reassuring, the other real and exceedingly reckless. The decorative policy, which has been taken at face value in the United States, at least until recently, professes to have replaced America's previous cold war intentions with a generous relationship of "strategic partnership and friendship." The public image of this approach has featured happy-talk meetings between American and Russian presidents, first "Bill and Boris" (Clinton and Yeltsin), then "George and Vladimir."

The real US policy has been very different—a relentless, winner-take-all exploitation of Russia's post-1991 weakness. Accompanied by broken American promises, condescending lectures and demands for unilateral concessions, it has been even more aggressive and uncompromising than was Washington's approach to Soviet Communist Russia. Consider its defining elements as they have unfolded—with fulsome support in both American political parties, influential newspapers and policy think tanks—since the early 1990s:

§ A growing military encirclement of Russia, on and near its borders, by US and NATO bases, which are already ensconced or being planned in at least half the fourteen other former Soviet republics, from the Baltics and Ukraine to Georgia, Azerbaijan and the new states of Central Asia. The result is a US-built reverse iron curtain and the remilitarization of American-Russian relations.

§ A tacit (and closely related) US denial that Russia has any legitimate national interests outside its own territory, even in ethnically akin or contiguous former republics such as Ukraine, Belarus and Georgia. How else to explain, to take a bellwether example, the thinking of Richard Holbrooke, Democratic would-be Secretary of State? While roundly condemning the Kremlin for promoting a pro-Moscow government in neighboring Ukraine, where Russia has centuries of shared linguistic, marital, religious, economic and security ties, Holbrooke declares that far-away Slav nation part of "our core zone of security."

§ Even more, a presumption that Russia does not have full sovereignty within its own borders, as expressed by constant US interventions in Moscow's internal affairs since 1992. They have included an on-site crusade by swarms of American "advisers," particularly during the 1990s, to direct Russia's "transition" from Communism; endless missionary sermons from afar, often couched in threats, on how that nation should and should not organize its political and economic systems; and active support for Russian anti-Kremlin groups, some associated with hated Yeltsin-era oligarchs.

That interventionary impulse has now grown even into suggestions that Putin be overthrown by the kind of US-backed "color revolutions" carried out since 2003 in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan, and attempted this year in Belarus. Thus, while mainstream editorial pages increasingly call the Russian president "thug," "fascist" and "Saddam Hussein," one of the Carnegie Endowment's several Washington crusaders assures us of "Putin's weakness" and vulnerability to "regime change." (Do proponents of "democratic regime change" in Russia care that it might mean destabilizing a nuclear state?)

§ Underpinning these components of the real US policy are familiar cold war double standards condemning Moscow for doing what Washington does—such as seeking allies and military bases in former Soviet republics, using its assets (oil and gas in Russia's case) as aid to friendly governments and regulating foreign money in its political life.

More broadly, when NATO expands to Russia's front and back doorsteps, gobbling up former Soviet-bloc members and

---

Stephen F. Cohen is professor of Russian studies at New York University. His books include Rethinking the Soviet Experience *(Oxford) and* Failed Crusade: America and the Tragedy of Post-Communist Russia *(Norton).*

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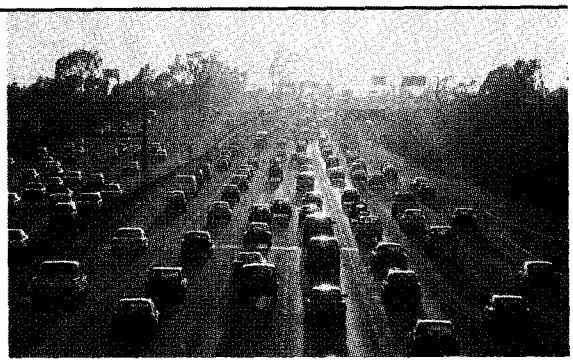

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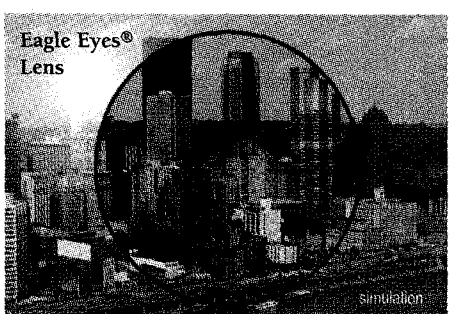

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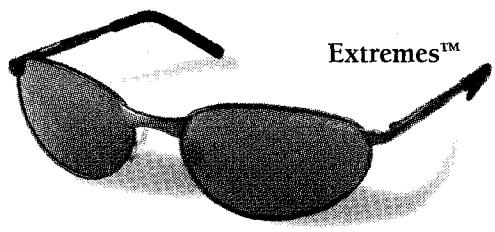

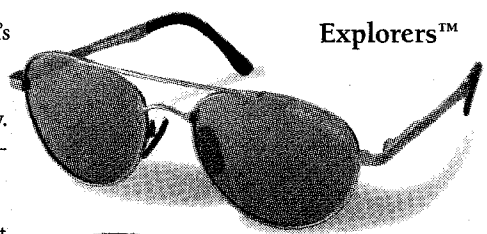

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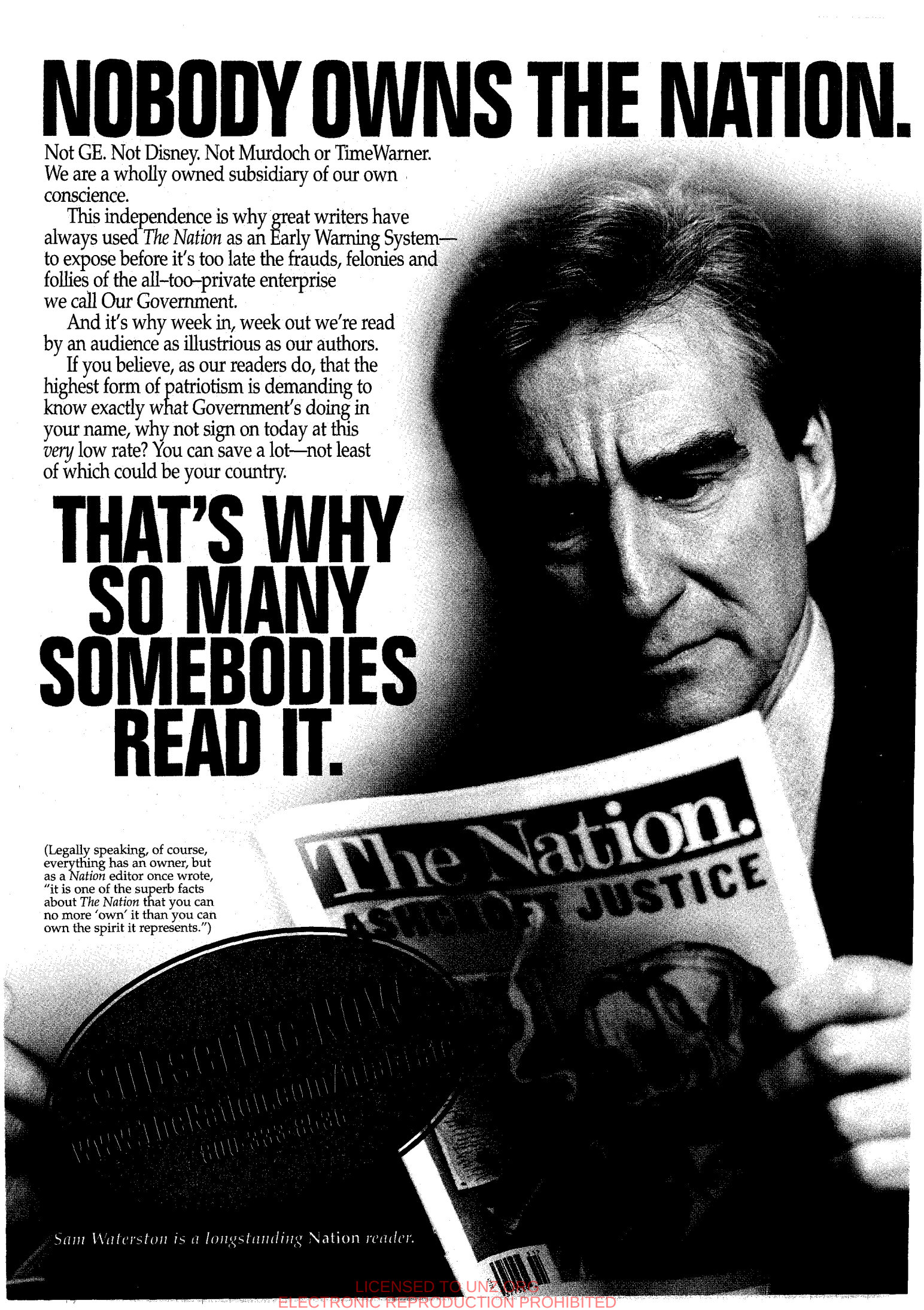

(Legally speaking, of course, everything has an owner, but as a *Nation* editor once wrote, "it is one of the superb facts about *The Nation* that you can no more 'own' it than you can own the spirit it represents.")

Sam Waterston is a longstanding Nation *reader.*

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republics, it is "fighting terrorism" and "protecting new states"; when Moscow protests, it is engaging in "cold war thinking." When Washington meddles in the politics of Georgia and Ukraine, it is "promoting democracy"; when the Kremlin does so, it is "neoimperialism." And not to forget the historical background: When in the 1990s the US-supported Yeltsin overthrew Russia's elected Parliament and Constitutional Court by force, gave its national wealth and television networks to Kremlin insiders, imposed a constitution without real constraints on executive power and rigged elections, it was "democratic reform"; when Putin continues that process, it is "authoritarianism."

§ Finally, the United States is attempting, by exploiting Russia's weakness, to acquire the nuclear superiority it could not achieve during the Soviet era. That is the essential meaning of two major steps taken by the Bush Administration in 2002, both against Moscow's strong wishes. One was the Administration's unilateral withdrawal from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, freeing it to try to create a system capable of destroying incoming missiles and thereby the capacity to launch a nuclear first strike without fear of retaliation. The other was pressuring the Kremlin to sign an ultimately empty nuclear weapons reduction agreement requiring no actual destruction of weapons and indeed allowing development of new ones; providing for no verification; and permitting unilateral withdrawal before the specified reductions are required.

The extraordinarily anti-Russian nature of these policies casts serious doubt on two American official and media axioms: that the recent "chill" in US-Russian relations has been caused by Putin's behavior at home and abroad, and that the cold war ended fifteen years ago. The first axiom is false, the second only half true: The cold war ended in Moscow, but not in Washington, as is clear from a brief look back.

The last Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, came to power in 1985 with heretical "New Thinking" that proposed not merely to ease but to actually abolish the decades-long cold war. His proposals triggered a fateful struggle in Washington (and Moscow) between policy-makers who wanted to seize the historic opportunity and those who did not. President Ronald Reagan decided to meet Gorbachev at least part of the way, as did his successor, the first President George Bush. As a result, in December 1989, at a historic summit meeting at Malta, Gorbachev and Bush declared the cold war over. (That extraordinary agreement evidently has been forgotten; thus we have the *New York Times* recently asserting that the US-Russian relationship today "is far better than it was 15 years ago.")

Declarations alone, however, could not terminate decades of warfare attitudes. Even when Bush was agreeing to end the cold war in 1989–91, many of his top advisers, like many members of the US political elite and media, strongly resisted. (I witnessed that rift on the eve of Malta, when I was asked to debate the issue in front of Bush and his divided foreign policy team.) Proof came with the Soviet breakup in December 1991: US officials and the media immediately presented the purported "end of the cold war" not as a mutual Soviet-American decision, which it certainly was, but as a great American victory and Russian defeat.

That (now standard) triumphalist narrative is the primary reason the cold war was quickly revived—not in Moscow a decade later by Putin but in Washington in the early 1990s, when the Clinton Administration made two epically unwise decisions. One was to treat post-Communist Russia as a defeated nation that was expected to replicate America's domestic practices and bow to its foreign policies. It required, behind the facade of the Clinton-Yeltsin "partnership and friendship" (as Clinton's top "Russia hand," Strobe Talbott, later confirmed), telling Yeltsin "here's some more shit for your face" and Moscow's "submissiveness." From that triumphalism grew the still-ongoing interventions in Moscow's internal affairs and the abiding notion that Russia has no autonomous rights at home or abroad.

Clinton's other unwise decision was to break the Bush Administration's promise to Soviet Russia in 1990–91 not to expand NATO "one inch to the east" and instead begin its expansion to Russia's borders. From that profound act of bad faith, followed by others, came the dangerously provocative military encirclement of Russia and growing Russian suspicions of US intentions. Thus, while American journalists and even scholars insist that "the cold war has indeed vanished" and that concerns about a new one are "silly," Russians across the political spectrum now believe that in Washington "the cold war did not end" and, still more, that "the US is imposing a new cold war on Russia."

That ominous view is being greatly exacerbated by Washington's ever-growing "anti-Russian fatwa," as a former Reagan appointee terms it. This year it includes a torrent of official and media statements denouncing Russia's domestic and foreign policies, vowing to bring more of its neighbors into NATO and urging Bush to boycott the G-8 summit to be chaired by Putin in St. Petersburg in July; a call by would-be Republican presidential nominee Senator John McCain for "very harsh" measures against Moscow; Congress's pointed refusal to repeal a Soviet-era restriction on trade with Russia; the Pentagon's revival of old rumors that Russian intelligence gave Saddam Hussein information endangering US troops; and comments by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, echoing the regime-changers, urging Russians, "if necessary, to change their government."

For its part, the White House deleted from its 2006 National Security Strategy the long-professed US-Russian partnership, backtracked on agreements to help Moscow join the World Trade Organization and adopted sanctions against Belarus, the Slav former republic most culturally akin to Russia and with whom the Kremlin is negotiating a new union state. Most significant, in May it dispatched Vice President Cheney to an anti-Russian conference in former Soviet Lithuania, now a NATO member, to denounce the Kremlin and make clear it is not "a strategic partner and a trusted friend," thereby ending fifteen years of official pretense.

More astonishing is a Council on Foreign Relations "task force report" on Russia, co-chaired by Democratic presidential aspirant John Edwards, issued in March. The "nonpartisan" council's reputed moderation and balance are nowhere in evidence. An unrelenting exercise in double standards, the report blames all the "disappointments" in US-Russian relations solely on "Russia's wrong direction" under Putin—from meddling in the former Soviet republics and backing Iran to conflicts over NATO,

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energy politics and the "rollback of Russian democracy."

Strongly implying that Bush has been too soft on Putin, the council report flatly rejects partnership with Moscow as "not a realistic prospect." It calls instead for "selective cooperation" and "selective opposition," depending on which suits US interests, and, in effect, Soviet-era containment. Urging more Western intervention in Moscow's political affairs, the report even reserves for Washington the right to reject Russia's future elections and leaders as "illegitimate." An article in the council's influential journal *Foreign Affairs* menacingly adds that the United States is quickly "attaining nuclear primacy" and the ability "to destroy the long-range nuclear arsenals of Russia or China with a first strike."

Every consequence of this bipartisan American cold war against post-Communist Russia has exacerbated the dangers inherent in the Soviet breakup mentioned above. The crusade to transform Russia during the 1990s, with its disastrous "shock therapy" economic measures and resulting antidemocratic acts, further destabilized the country, fostering an oligarchical system that plundered the state's wealth, deprived essential infrastructures of investment, impoverished the people and nurtured dangerous corruption. In the process, it discredited Western-style reform, generated mass anti-Americanism where there had been almost none—only 5 percent of Russians surveyed in May thought the United States was a "friend"—and eviscerated the once-influential pro-American faction in Kremlin and electoral politics.

The American cold war against post-Communist Russia has exacerbated the dangers inherent in the Soviet breakup.

Military encirclement, the Bush Administration's striving for nuclear supremacy and today's renewed US intrusions into Russian politics are having even worse consequences. They have provoked the Kremlin into undertaking its own conventional and nuclear buildup, relying more rather than less on compromised mechanisms of control and maintenance, while continuing to invest miserly sums in the country's decaying economic base and human resources. The same American policies have also caused Moscow to cooperate less rather than more in existing US-funded programs to reduce the multiple risks represented by Russia's materials of mass destruction and to prevent accidental nuclear war. More generally, they have inspired a new Kremlin ideology of "emphasizing our sovereignty" that is increasingly nationalistic, intolerant of foreign-funded NGOs as "fifth columns" and reliant on anti-Western views of the "patriotic" Russian intelligentsia and the Orthodox Church.

Moscow's responses abroad have also been the opposite of what Washington policy-makers should want. Interpreting US-backed "color revolutions" as a quest for military outposts on Russia's borders, the Kremlin now opposes pro-democracy movements in former Soviet republics more than ever, while supporting the most authoritarian regimes in the region, from Belarus to Uzbekistan. Meanwhile, Moscow is forming a political, economic and military "strategic partnership" with China, lending support to Iran and other anti-American governments in the Middle East and already putting surface-to-air missiles back in Belarus, in effect Russia's western border with NATO.

If American policy and Russia's predictable countermeasures continue to develop into a full-scale cold war, several new factors could make it even more dangerous than was its predecessor. Above all, the growing presence of Western bases and US-backed governments in the former Soviet republics has moved the "front lines" of the conflict, in the alarmed words of a Moscow newspaper, from Germany to Russia's "near abroad." As a "hostile ring tightens around the Motherland," in the view of former Prime Minister Evgeny Primakov, many different Russians see a mortal threat. Putin's chief political deputy, Vladislav Surkov, for example, sees the "enemy...at the gates," and the novelist and Soviet-era dissident Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn sees the "complete encirclement of Russia and then the loss of its sovereignty." The risks of direct military conflict could therefore be greater than ever. Protesting overflights by NATO aircraft, a Russian general has already warned, "If they violate our borders, they should be shot down."

Worsening the geopolitical factor are radically different American and Russian self-perceptions. By the mid-1960s the US-Soviet cold war relationship had acquired a significant degree of stability because the two superpowers, perceiving a stalemate, began to settle for political and military "parity." Today, however, the United States, the self-proclaimed "only superpower," has a far more expansive view of its international entitlements and possibilities. Moscow, on the other hand, feels weaker and more vulnerable than it did before 1991. And in that asymmetry lies the potential for a less predictable cold war relationship between the two still fully armed nuclear states.

There is also a new psychological factor. Because the unfolding cold war is undeclared, it is already laden with feelings of betrayal and mistrust on both sides. Having welcomed Putin as Yeltsin's chosen successor and offered him its conception of "partnership and friendship," Washington now feels deceived by Putin's policies. According to two characteristic commentaries in the *Washington Post*, Bush had a "well-intentioned Russian policy," but "a Russian autocrat...betrayed the American's faith." Putin's Kremlin, however, has been reacting largely to a decade of broken US promises and Yeltsin's boozy compliance. Thus Putin's declaration four years ago, paraphrased on Russian radio: "The era of Russian geopolitical concessions [is] coming to an end." (Looking back, he remarked bitterly that Russia has been "constantly deceived.")

Still worse, the emerging cold war lacks the substantive negotiations and cooperation, known as détente, that constrained the previous one. Behind the lingering facade, a well-informed Russian tells us, "dialogue is almost nonexistent." It is especially true in regard to nuclear weapons. The Bush Administration's abandonment of the ABM treaty and real reductions, its decision to build an antimissile shield, and talk of preemptive war and nuclear strikes have all but abolished long-established US-Soviet agreements that have kept the nuclear peace for nearly fifty years. Indeed, according to a report, Bush's National Security Council is contemptuous of arms control as "baggage from the cold war." In short, as dangers posed by nuclear weapons have grown and a new arms race

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unfolds, efforts to curtail or even discuss them have ended.

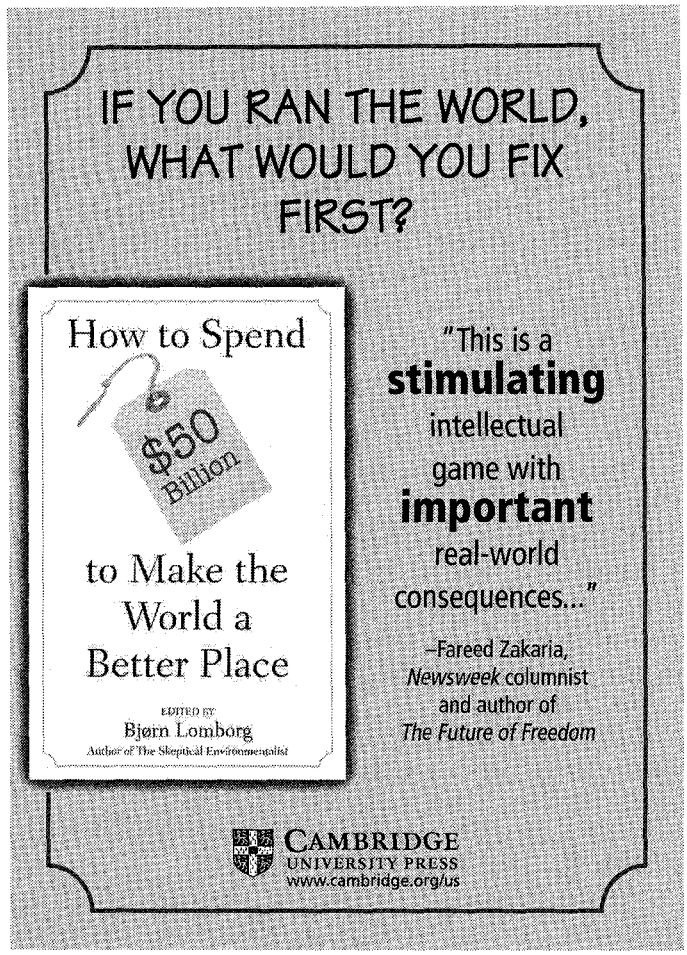
Finally, anti–cold war forces that once played an important role in the United States no longer exist. Cold war lobbies, old and new ones, therefore operate virtually unopposed, some of them funded by anti-Kremlin Russian oligarchs in exile. At high political levels, the new American cold war has been, and remains, fully bipartisan, from Clinton to Bush, Madeleine Albright to Rice, Edwards to McCain. At lower levels, once robust pro-détente public groups, particularly anti-arms-race movements, have been largely demobilized by official, media and academic myths that "the cold war is over" and we have been "liberated" from nuclear and other dangers in Russia.

Also absent (or silent) are the kinds of American scholars who protested cold war excesses in the past. Meanwhile, a legion of new intellectual cold warriors has emerged, particularly in Washington, media favorites whose crusading anti-Putin zeal goes largely unchallenged. (Typically, one inveterate missionary constantly charges Moscow with "not delivering" on US interests, while another now calls for a surreal crusade, "backed by international donors," to correct young Russians' thinking about Stalin.) There are a few notable exceptions—also bipartisan, from former Reaganites to *Nation* contributors—but "anathematizing Russia," as Gorbachev recently put it, is so consensual that even an outspoken critic of US policy inexplicably ends an article, "Of course, Russia has been largely to blame."

Making these political factors worse has been the "pluralist" US mainstream media. In the past, opinion page editors and television producers regularly solicited voices to challenge cold war zealots, but today such dissenters, and thus the vigorous public debate of the past, are almost entirely missing. Instead, influential editorial pages are dominated by resurgent cold war orthodoxies, led by the *Post*, whose incessant demonization of Putin's "autocracy" and "crude neoimperialism" reads like a bygone *Pravda* on the Potomac. On the conservative *New York Sun*'s front page, US-Russian relations today are presented as "a duel to the death—perhaps literally."

The Kremlin's strong preference "not to return to the cold war era," as Putin stated May 13 in response to Cheney's inflammatory charges, has been mainly responsible for preventing such fantasies from becoming reality. "Someone is still fighting the cold war," a British academic recently wrote, "but it isn't Russia." A fateful struggle over this issue, however, is now under way in Moscow, with the "pro-Western" Putin resisting demands for a "more hard line" course and, closely related, favoring larger FDR-style investments in the people (and the country's stability). Unless US policy, which is abetting the hard-liners in that struggle, changes fundamentally, the symbiotic axis between American and Russian cold warriors that drove the last conflict will re-emerge. If so, the Kremlin, whether under Putin or a successor, will fight the new one—with all the unprecedented dangers that would entail.

Given different principles and determined leadership, it is still not too late for a new US policy toward post-Soviet Russia. Its components would include full cooperation in securing Moscow's materials of mass destruction; radically reducing nuclear weapons on both sides while banning the development of new ones and taking all warheads off hair-trigger alert;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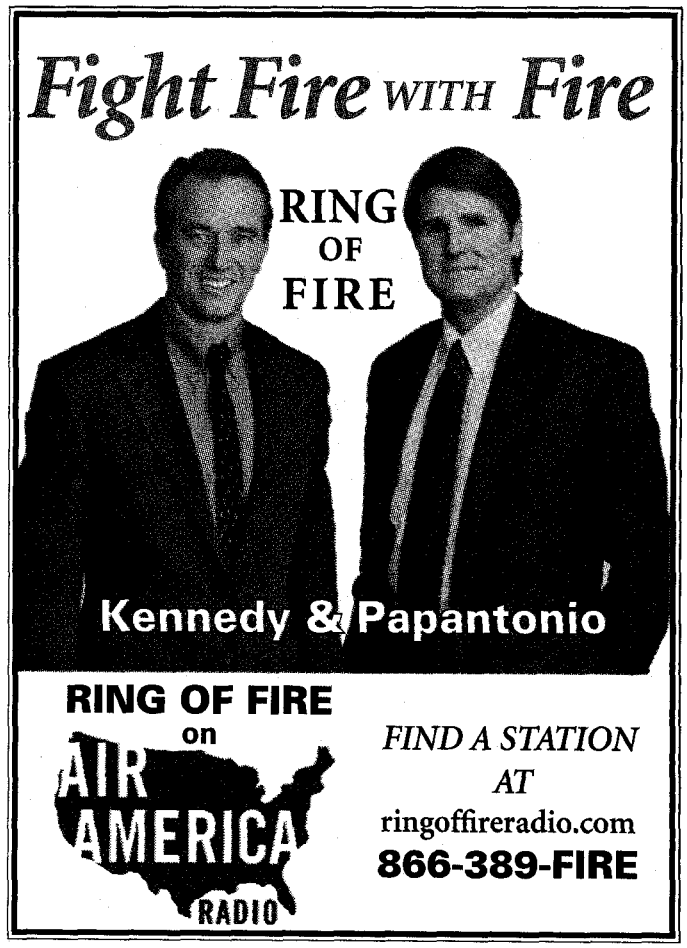

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dissuading other states from acquiring those weapons; countering terrorist activities and drug-trafficking near Russia; and augmenting energy supplies to the West.

None of those programs are possible without abandoning the warped priorities and fallacies that have shaped US policy since 1991. National security requires identifying and pursuing essential priorities, but US policy-makers have done neither consistently. The only truly vital American interest in Russia today is preventing its stockpiles of mass destruction from endangering the world, whether through Russia's destabilization or hostility to the West.

All of the dangerous fallacies underlying US policy are expressions of unbridled triumphalism. The decision to treat post-Soviet Russia as a vanquished nation, analogous to postwar Germany and Japan (but without the funding), squandered a historic opportunity for a real partnership and established the bipartisan premise that Moscow's "direction" at home and abroad should be determined by the United States. Applied to a country with Russia's size and long history as a world power, and that had not been militarily defeated, the premise was inherently self-defeating and certain to provoke a resentful backlash.

The dangerous fallacies underlying US policy are expressions of an unbridled triumphalism, treating Russia as a defeated nation.

That folly produced two others. One was the assumption that the United States had the right, wisdom and power to remake post-Communist Russia into a political and economic replica of America. A conceit as vast as its ignorance of Russia's historical traditions and contemporary realities, it led to the counterproductive crusade of the 1990s, which continues in various ways today. The other was the presumption that Russia should be America's junior partner in foreign policy with no interests except those of the United States. By disregarding Russia's history, different geopolitical realities and vital interests, this presumption has also been senseless.

As a Eurasian state with 20–25 million Muslim citizens of its own and with Iran one of its few neighbors not being recruited by NATO, for example, Russia can ill afford to be drawn into Washington's expanding conflict with the Islamic world, whether in Iran or Iraq. Similarly, by demanding that Moscow vacate its traditional political and military positions in former Soviet republics so the United States and NATO can occupy them—and even subsidize Ukraine's defection with cheap gas—Washington is saying that Russia not only has no Monroe Doctrine–like rights in its own neighborhood but no legitimate security rights at all. Not surprisingly, such flagrant double standards have convinced the Kremlin that Washington has become more belligerent since Yeltsin's departure simply "because Russian policy has become more pro-Russian."

Nor was American triumphalism a fleeting reaction to 1991. A decade later, the tragedy of September 11 gave Washington a second chance for a real partnership with Russia. At a meeting on June 16, 2001, President Bush sensed in Putin's "soul" a partner for America. And so it seemed after September 11, when Putin's Kremlin did more than any NATO government to assist the US war effort in Afghanistan, giving it valuable intelligence, a Moscow-trained Afghan combat force and easy access to crucial air bases in former Soviet Central Asia.

The Kremlin understandably believed that in return Washington would give it an equitable relationship. Instead, it got US withdrawal from the ABM treaty, Washington's claim to permanent bases in Central Asia (as well as Georgia) and independent access to Caspian oil and gas, a second round of NATO expansion taking in several former Soviet republics and bloc members, and a still-growing indictment of its domestic and foreign conduct. Astonishingly, not even September 11 was enough to end Washington's winner-take-all principles.

Why have Democratic and Republican administrations believed they could act in such relentlessly anti-Russian ways without endangering US national security? The answer is another fallacy—the belief that Russia, diminished and weakened by its loss of the Soviet Union, had no choice but to bend to America's will. Even apart from the continued presence of Soviet-era weapons in Russia, it was a grave misconception. Because of its extraordinary material and human attributes, Russia, as its intellectuals say, has always been "destined to be a great power." This was still true after 1991.

Even before world energy prices refilled its coffers, the Kremlin had ready alternatives to the humiliating role scripted by Washington. Above all, Russia could forge strategic alliances with eager anti-US and non-NATO governments in the East and elsewhere, becoming an arsenal of conventional weapons and nuclear knowledge for states from China and India to Iran and Venezuela. Moscow has already begun that turning away from the West, and it could move much further in that direction.

Still more, even today's diminished Russia can fight, perhaps win, a cold war on its new front lines across the vast former Soviet territories. It has the advantages of geographic proximity, essential markets, energy pipelines and corporate ownership, along with kinship and language and common experiences. They give Moscow an array of soft and hard power to use, if it chooses, against neighboring governments considering a new patron in faraway Washington.

Economically, the Kremlin could cripple nearly destitute Georgia and Moldova by banning their products and otherwise unemployed migrant workers from Russia and by charging Georgia and Ukraine full "free-market" prices for essential energy. Politically, Moscow could truncate tiny Georgia and Moldova, and big Ukraine, by welcoming their large, pro-Russian territories into the Russian Federation or supporting their demands for independent statehood (as the West has been doing for Kosovo and Montenegro in Serbia). Militarily, Moscow could take further steps toward turning the Shanghai Cooperation Organization—now composed of Russia, China and four Central Asian states, with Iran and India possible members—into an anti-NATO defensive alliance, an "OPEC with nuclear weapons," a Western analyst warned.

That is not all. In the US-Russian struggle in Central Asia over Caspian oil and gas, Washington, as even the triumphalist

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Thomas Friedman admits, "is at a severe disadvantage." The United States has already lost its military base in Uzbekistan and may soon lose the only remaining one in the region, in Kyrgyzstan; the new pipeline it backed to bypass Russia runs through Georgia, whose stability depends considerably on Moscow; Washington's new friend in oil-rich Azerbaijan is an anachronistic dynastic ruler; and Kazakhstan, whose enormous energy reserves make it a particular US target, has its own large Russian population and is moving back toward Moscow.

Nor is the Kremlin powerless in direct dealings with the West. It can mount more than enough warheads to defeat any missile shield and illusion of "nuclear primacy." It can shut US businesses out of multibillion-dollar deals in Russia and, as it recently reminded the European Union, which gets 25 percent of its gas from Russia, "redirect supplies" to hungry markets in the East. And Moscow could deploy its resources, connections and UN Security Council veto against US interests involving, for instance, nuclear proliferation, Iran, Afghanistan and possibly even Iraq.

Contrary to exaggerated US accusations, the Kremlin has not yet resorted to such retaliatory measures in any significant way. But unless Washington stops abasing and encroaching on Russia, there is no "sovereign" reason why it should not do so. Certainly, nothing Moscow has gotten from Washington since 1992, a Western security specialist emphasizes, "compensates for the geopolitical harm the United States is doing to Russia."

American crusaders insist it is worth the risk in order to democratize Russia and other former Soviet republics. In reality, their campaigns since 1992 have only discredited that cause in Russia. Praising the despised Yeltsin and endorsing other unpopular figures as Russia's "democrats," while denouncing the popular Putin, has associated democracy with the social pain, chaos and humiliation of the 1990s. Ostracizing Belarus President Aleksandr Lukashenko while embracing tyrants in Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan has related it to the thirst for oil. Linking "democratic revolutions" in Ukraine and Georgia to NATO membership has equated them with US expansionism. Focusing on the victimization of billionaire Mikhail Khodorkhovsky and not on Russian poverty or ongoing mass protests against social injustices has suggested democracy is only for oligarchs. And by insisting on their indispensable role, US crusaders have all but said (wrongly) that Russians are incapable of democracy or resisting abuses of power on their own.

The result is dark Russian suspicions of American intentions ignored by US policy-makers and media alike. They include the belief that Washington's real purpose is to take control of the country's energy resources and nuclear weapons and use encircling NATO satellite states to "de-sovereignize" Russia, turning it into a "vassal of the West." More generally, US policy has fostered the belief that the American cold war was never really aimed at Soviet Communism but always at Russia, a suspicion given credence by *Post* and *Times* columnists who characterize Russia even after Communism as an inherently "autocratic state" with "brutish instincts."

To overcome those towering obstacles to a new relationship, Washington has to abandon the triumphalist conceits primarily responsible for the revived cold war and its growing dangers. It means respecting Russia's sovereign right to determine its course at home (including disposal of its energy resources). As the record plainly shows, interfering in Moscow's internal affairs, whether on-site or from afar, only harms the chances for political liberties and economic prosperity that still exist in that tormented nation.

It also means acknowledging Russia's legitimate security interests, especially in its own "near abroad." In particular, the planned third expansion of NATO, intended to include Ukraine, must not take place. Extending NATO to Russia's doorsteps has already brought relations near the breaking point (without actually benefiting any nation's security); absorbing Ukraine, which Moscow regards as essential to its Slavic identity and its military defense, may be the point of no return, as even pro-US Russians anxiously warn. Nor would it be democratic, since nearly two-thirds of Ukrainians are opposed. The explosive possibilities were adumbrated in late May and early June when local citizens in ethnic Russian Crimea blockaded a port and roads where a US naval ship and contingent of Marines suddenly appeared, provoking resolutions declaring the region "anti-NATO territory" and threats of "a new Vietnam."

Time for a new US policy is running out, but there is no hint of one in official or unofficial circles. Denouncing the Kremlin in May, Cheney spoke "like a triumphant cold warrior," a *Times* correspondent reported. A top State Department official has already announced the "next great mission" in and around Russia. In the same unreconstructed spirit, Rice has demanded Russians "recognize that we have legitimate interests...in their neighborhood," without a word about Moscow's interests; and a former Clinton official has held the Kremlin "accountable for the ominous security threats...developing between NATO's eastern border and Russia." Meanwhile, the Bush Administration is playing Russian roulette with Moscow's control of its nuclear weapons. Its missile shield project having already provoked a destabilizing Russian buildup, the Administration now proposes to further confuse Moscow's early-warning system, risking an accidental launch, by putting conventional warheads on long-range missiles for the first time.

In a democracy we might expect alternative policy proposals from would-be leaders. But there are none in either party, only demands for a more anti-Russian course, or silence. We should not be surprised. Acquiescence in Bush's monstrous war in Iraq has amply demonstrated the political elite's limited capacity for introspection, independent thought and civic courage. (It prefers to falsely blame the American people, as the managing editor of *Foreign Affairs* recently did, for craving "ideological red meat.") It may also be intimidated by another revived cold war practice—personal defamation. The *Post* and *The New Yorker* have already labeled critics of their Russia policy "Putin apologists" and charged them with "appeasement" and "again taking the Russian side of the Cold War."

The vision and courage of heresy will therefore be needed to escape today's new cold war orthodoxies and dangers, but it is hard to imagine a US politician answering the call. There is, however, a not-too-distant precedent. Twenty years ago, when the world faced exceedingly grave cold war perils, Gorbachev unexpectedly emerged from the orthodox and repressive Soviet political class to offer a heretical way out. Is there an American leader today ready to retrieve that missed opportunity? ■

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MALE PRISON RAPE IS STILL NOT TAKEN SERIOUSLY, DESPITE THE HUGE NUMBER OF VICTIMS.

'They Deserve It'

DAN BELL

Even as the gates slammed shut and he stepped out into the roar of the main cellblock, T.J. Parsell was still in denial. He had landed in prison after a drunken prank with a toy gun netted him $50 and two and a half years. His older brother, who had served some brief jail time, had given him some advice: Look tough. Show no fear. Be a man.

RYAN INZANA

But even if Parsell could have kept his shoulders back, his chin cocked and the panic out of his eyes as he walked beneath five stories of barred cells, through the echoes of slamming doors, the clatter of chow trays and the shouts of 500 inmates, they already knew: This paper-thin kid with a desperate game face was fresh meat. Barely six weeks later, according to Parsell, he had been drugged, gang-raped by three inmates and "sold" to a fourth with the flip of a coin. He was 17 years old.

Parsell's story is horrifying, but hardly surprising. And therein lies a paradox: If prison rape is as prevalent as it is thought to be, it stands as one of the most appallingly frequent human rights abuses in America. But as a matter of public concern, when the victims are male, the issue remains little more than a dirty joke.

In 2001 Human Rights Watch attempted to turn off the canned laughter. Drawing on testimonies from 200 prisoners in thirty-four states, HRW released a report titled "No Escape: Male Rape in US Prisons." The findings suggested that male rape, often accompanied by almost unimaginable violence, is widespread throughout the US prison system. The report was damning enough to help convince Congress to pass the optimistically named 2003 Prison Rape Elimination Act. In writing PREA, Congress estimated that 13 percent of inmates had been sexually assaulted. Even if that is (as many experts believe) a conservative estimate, it translates into a stunning number of victims. "Nearly 200,000 inmates now incarcerated have been or will be the victims of prison rape," the act states. "The total number of inmates who have been sexually assaulted in the past 20 years likely exceeds 1,000,000."

The act is intended to tackle rape in both male and female prisons; there is no reliable gender breakdown of prison rape victims, but 93 percent of America's prison population is male.

Despite the bold promise implied by its name, PREA hasn't made a dent in the statistics so far. Although the act sets out to define new standards for detection, prevention, reduction and punishment of prison rape, no new standards have yet been established—and when they are, they are unlikely to go into effect before 2010. Even then, it is by no means certain that they will be effectively enforced.

But the problem goes deeper than inadequate legislation. The prevailing social attitude toward male prison rape was typified by California Attorney General Bill Lockyer back in 2001, when Enron CEO Ken Lay was in the news. "I would love to personally escort Lay," Lockyer said, "to an 8-by-10 cell that he could share with a tattooed dude who says, Hi, my name is Spike, honey."

"I think in a lot of ways this issue is where the women's issue was about thirty years ago," says Lara Stemple, former executive director of Stop Prisoner Rape, the only national organization dedicated to advocating on behalf of prison-rape survivors. "People still make jokes about men being raped that people would never make about women." If the male victim is behind bars, the problem is compounded. Louise Kindley, a veteran rape-crisis counselor who recently opened New York's first program for male survivors, says, "There is an idea that they deserve it."

As a first-time teenage offender, Parsell fit the profile of a prison rape victim to a T. After an initial six weeks on lockdown, he was transferred into the general population at Riverside Correctional Facility, at that time (the late 1970s) one of Michigan's three "close-custody" security prisons—one security level down from maximum. It could hardly have been a worse place for him to land: In a 2000 investigation of medium- and maximum-security prisons in the state, PREA commissioner Cindy Struckman-Johnson surveyed 1,788 inmates. One in ten said they had been raped, and one in five had experienced "pressured or forced sexual contact."

Parsell didn't know that, of course. But he did know that he was scared and lonely. So despite his brother's warning that any sign of weakness would turn him into a victim, when an older inmate came up and started talking to him on his first day at Riverside, Parsell opened a chink in his exhausted defenses. "The guy was just very friendly," he remembers, "and he said, You know, after count [the roll call of inmates] why don't you come down to chow with me?" By late morning the following day, Parsell and his new friend, Ron, were in the card room with two other inmates, dipping into a plastic bag full of homemade hooch. The old Maxwell House coffee jar Parsell was drinking out of never seemed to get empty.

It took about half an hour for the Thorazine they'd spiked his drink with to hit. Suddenly Parsell couldn't think straight. He couldn't understand what was being said to him, and he couldn't understand why he couldn't understand. It was, he says, like watching a film with pieces of blank tape spliced into it: "skips, like mini-blackouts," flashes followed by darkness.

Then he was back in one of the dormitories. Four inmates were waiting for him. It was only then that Parsell began to understand what was happening. But by the time the panic hit, it was too late. Ron shoved Parsell onto one of the bunks and

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another two inmates tore off his pants. Even if Parsell hadn't been half their size, with the Thorazine he didn't have a chance. Ron pushed himself on top of Parsell and raped him, forcing Parsell's head into the pillow to muffle his screams as his rectum was ripped open. His cries were so desperate that they almost suffocated him trying to keep him quiet. But Ron didn't stop. Parsell felt like he screamed for an eternity.

By that afternoon he had been raped by another two inmates and traded into sexual slavery with a coin toss. His new owner wasn't one of his rapists, but another inmate named Slo-Drag. The rest of the prison knew by the following day. "That's Slo-Drag's boy," they said as they brushed past. Ron thought it was hilarious; he could hardly stop laughing.

Parsell, now president of Stop Prisoner Rape's board of directors, speaks widely about his experiences. He believes that his rape, like many others, could have been prevented. Both survivors and advocates are certain that a large portion of sexual assaults in prisons could be avoided if young, vulnerable inmates were not housed with violent predators, and if corrections officials made it clear to new inmates that they will quickly and conscientiously respond when violence occurs. "There has to be a climate where inmates can report effectively, yet be protected from retaliation," says Struckman-Johnson.

But the fact is, many prison guards couldn't care less. In a study of Midwestern prisons in 1991, Helen Eigenberg of the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga found that 16 percent of officers thought inmates deserved rape if they were homosexual; 17 percent if they "dressed or talked in feminine ways"; 23 percent if they had "previously engaged in consensual sexual acts in prison"; and 24 percent if they had taken "money or cigarettes for consensual sexual acts prior to a rape." An earlier study Eigenberg conducted in Texas echoed those findings.

'There has to be a climate where inmates can report effectively, yet be protected from retaliation.' —Cindy Struckman-Johnson

Even prison administrators admit to widespread indifference. A 2004 survey of executive-level staff, commissioned by the National Institute of Corrections, concluded: "Sexual assault has been accepted in the past" and "there has been an expectation that it will occur. In some prison environments practices exist that encourage or facilitate sexual assault."

Like other victims, Parsell is all too familiar with those "practices." Before he was sent to Riverside, he was interviewed by a psychologist at Jackson Prison, where he was initially held. Parsell remembers the doctor calmly asking, "Have you ever been fucked?"

"No!" Parsell said.

"Well, you will be. You're going inside the walls," said the psychologist.

"They'll have to kill me first," Parsell said.

"That can be arranged," he remembers the psychologist saying. "These guys that are doing life, they don't care about you. They'll slit your throat and then they'll fuck you."

(Charles Anderson, the then-warden at Jackson, now retired, says that he never heard of an inmate being threatened by a Jackson psychologist. "The psych units were very sensitive to the needs of prisoners," he says. "I have never known of a prisoner to be threatened with rape by a clinician.")

The PREA legislation promised to make certain that prison rape would no longer be treated with indifference. The act funded a nationwide study of prison rape by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) and created a PREA commission to assess the data and recommend a set of standards to the Attorney General. Examples of those being considered are protocols for separating vulnerable inmates from predators and hiring independent prison ombudsmen to hear complaints of abuse. The Justice Department will issue policies, based on the commission's recommendations, that will become law in all federal prisons. States will have to adopt the federal guidelines or lose 5 percent of their federal funding—serious money.

Unfortunately, the pace of this "Elimination Act" is glacial. The PREA commission, which has held five hearings thus far in its three years of existence, is not scheduled to issue its recommendations until July 2007. At that point, the Attorney General's office plans to spend another year consulting with state corrections departments and industry officials before issuing its guidelines. No federal fines will be enforced until 2010 at the earliest.

Once the guidelines go into effect, enforcement is likely to be a problem. PREA authorizes no civil or criminal penalties for prison guards or administrators who preside over institutionalized rape. The law does require administrators from the nation's three facilities with the highest incidence of rape to come before a review panel each year to explain themselves. But this public shaming is, so far, the only real threat faced by the administrators. And even the review panels and fact-finding by the BJS face an uncertain future. Funding for the research is guaranteed by PREA only until 2010. "There is just no way to anticipate either the funding stream or what data collections will look like that far down the road," says Timothy Hughes, a BJS statistician charged with directing the prison-rape data collection. "If there was no funding stream, and the collections didn't continue, then I would imagine that there would be no review panel, because there would be no data to review."

But if the review process looks toothless, the legislation is weakest of all in its pocketbook. Neither the commission nor the Attorney General is allowed to recommend measures "that would impose substantial additional costs" on prison authorities. "We are restrained by the bill," says Struckman-Johnson. "These have to be practical, inexpensive ideas that we put forth. We can't say, Build new prisons."

There is some funding available for states to establish "zero tolerance" programs. Through the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), Congress authorized $40 million a year through 2010 when it passed PREA. But those appropriations still have to make their way into the federal budget every year, and the money has been disappearing fast. In 2004 $37.2 million was appropriated for zero tolerance. But by 2006 the figure had dropped to less than half that. Although not yet finalized, the 2007 budget request has shrunk even further, to a paltry $2 million.

(Continued on Page 24)

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War Is Personal: Mona Parsons/Ag

Jeremy was sitting alone at the kitchen table, his thoughts somewhere else, when the women in his life began to encircle him. His wife, Maricar, slumped down across from him, her arms wrapped tightly around herself; his mother, Mona, sat closer, but looking down. Sayward was standing directly behind her brother when she started in. She shouted for Mona and Maricar to get the rope and the dark clothes. "I've got the iron skillet to whack him with," she said.

When Jeremy pretended he hadn't heard a word of this, Sayward snapped, "It's up to you what we do. If it was my husband going back to Iraq, I'd divorce him. I'd have him sign the papers before he ever got on that plane." She took a deep breath, trying to calm herself. "Worst thing is, we're powerless. We wake up from all the bad dreams, call our congressmen and senators; we still don't get anybody to say that what's happening is wrong."

Rubbing at her eyes, she reminded him that it was only a short drive to Canada. "No joking, what other options do we have?" she asked. Her voice began to crack. "You have to know I would willingly go to prison if you don't go back."

Jeremy stood up from the table. He was turning to leave when his and Maricar's 5-year-old daughter sashayed past wearing a tattered Cinderella gown and a rhinestone tiara. Sayward reached for her brother's hand. It seemed as if the storm had passed, then Mona placed the newspaper she'd been holding onto the table.

She began slowly and solemnly to read the headlines. "Sixty-nine killed in Iraq today. Police raid mosque. Thirty more bodies found..."

"If I could end the whole business, I would," Jeremy interrupted, sounding defensive and sad.

"But it's not getting any better over there—it's getting worse."

"I'm all right. For me, it's easy. I sit in an office, work in a headquarters."

"Unless they change where you're at, and that could happen at any time."

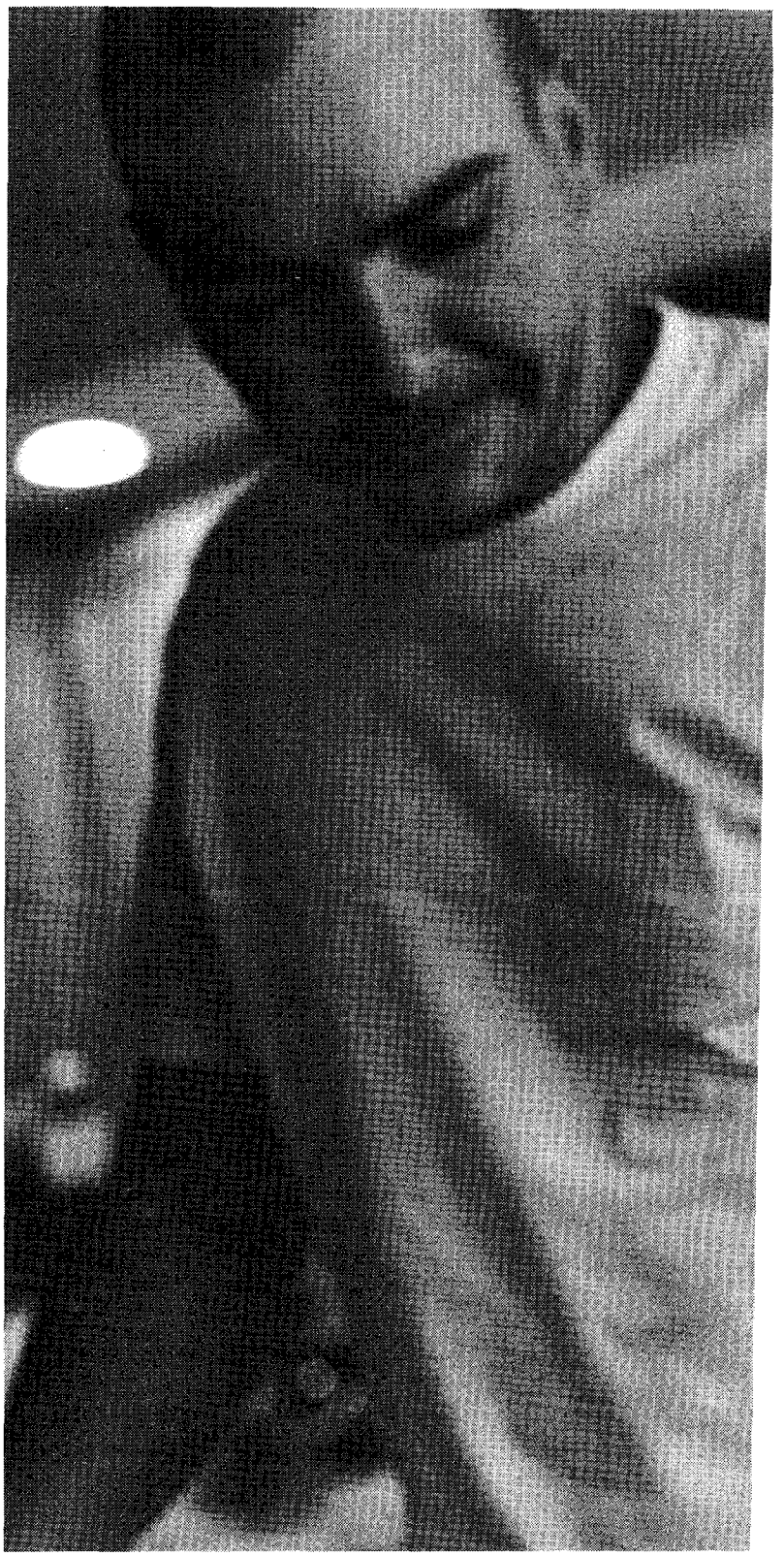
"Right, and I volunteer for suicide missions every day."

"In Sunday's newspaper the death toll was 2,319. Today, 2,322. In August, the death toll was 1,820—"

"Can't we stop before we rehash everything—"

"Being your mom, my greatest fear is that you won't come back to me. So I feel that I have to fight, have to argue, do everything I can. You know, when you leave, everything stops—"

"OK, yeah, feel sad. But after I'm gone, please. Tonight, just try to enjoy my company... if you can."



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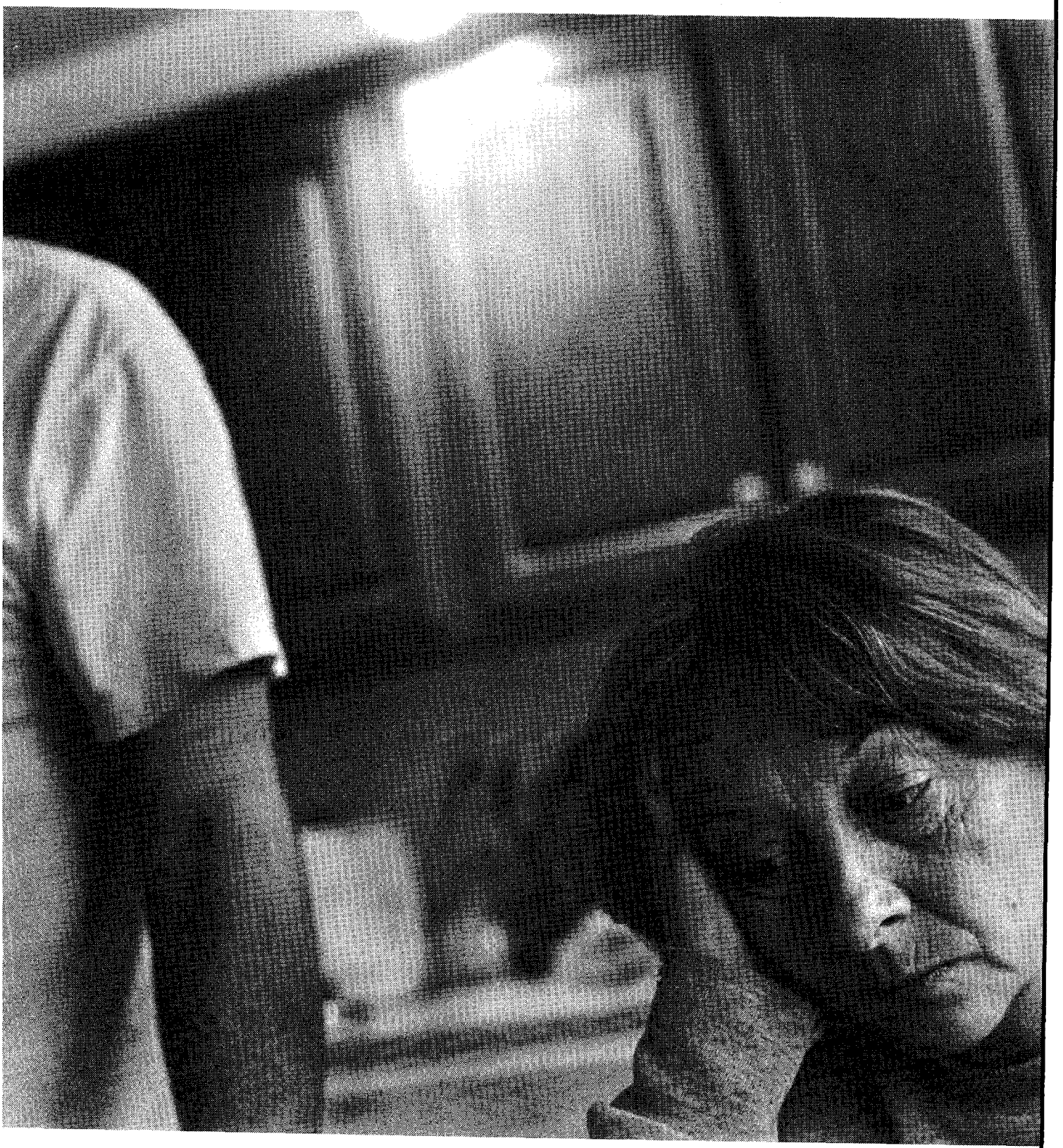
52/Mt. Vernon, Ohio



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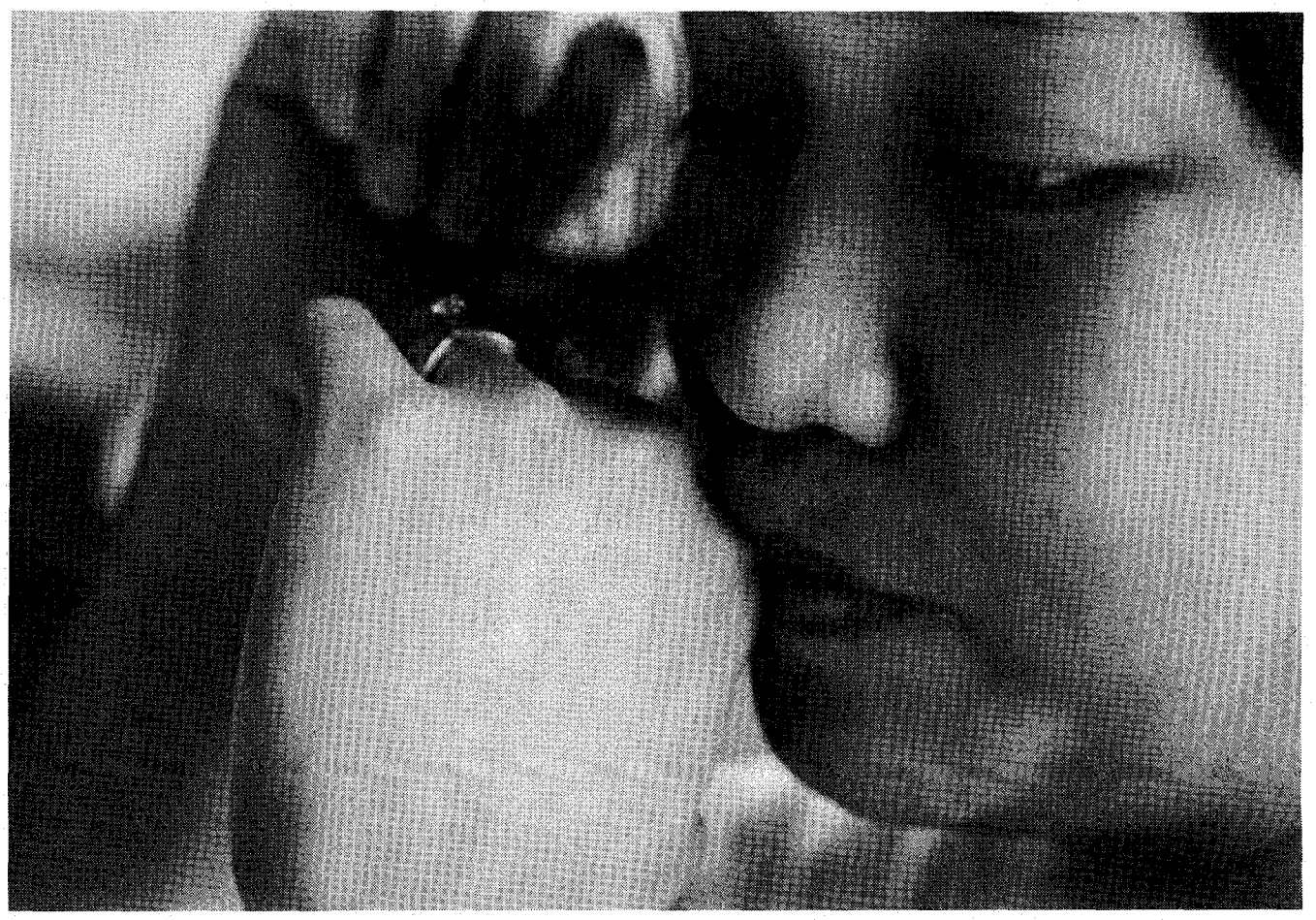
On Tuesday Mona awoke before dawn. She peered outside, put the coffee on, then, determined not to let her emotions show, pushed her grandchildren's toys out of the way. It had been agreed earlier in the week that she would be the one to drive Jeremy to the airport. Goodbyes would be said at home.

Mona had just scooped up some discarded socks when the bedroom door opened and Jeremy hurried out. Gone were the T-shirt and the bits of stubble on his chin. He was clean-shaven, in uniform; with the stress of having to leave showing on his face, he looked much older than he had a day earlier.

A high school dropout who had been, in his own words, "curious about books and the world but in need of discipline," Jeremy enlisted in the Army when he was 22. It was while stationed in South Korea that he met and fell in love with a young waitress named Maricar who had journeyed there from an impoverished village in the Philippines.



Honorably discharged after four years, Jeremy earned his high school equivalency, married, had two children, tried college, worked in a series of what he called "on-and-off, going-nowhere" jobs. Then about a year and a half ago, after a particularly hurtful bout of unemployment, he re-enlisted. He did this without first informing Maricar, his sister, or his mother, knowing that they wouldn't approve.

"It's time," Mona called out. Jeremy gave his sleeping children a last hug and kiss, and went looking for Maricar, who had abruptly left the room. Finding her slumped over on the couch, he bent down, took her face in his hands, tried to console her. He knew all too well that she had suffered from depression the whole time he was away, that she had anxiety attacks, couldn't sleep, had recurring nightmares. She would hear gunshots, see cars exploding, watch as men with guns and knives placed a long, black hood over his head.

Jeremy cleared his throat and pressed against her. He told Maricar that his family loved her, that he loved her. She grew rigid. "If you love me," she said, "you won't go."

The drive down to the Columbus airport was quick, despite the gusty winds and the rain. At the gate Jeremy and Mona held on to each other. They hardly spoke. Then Mona watched from a distance as her son put his belongings through the X-ray, pulled his boots back on, trudged away.

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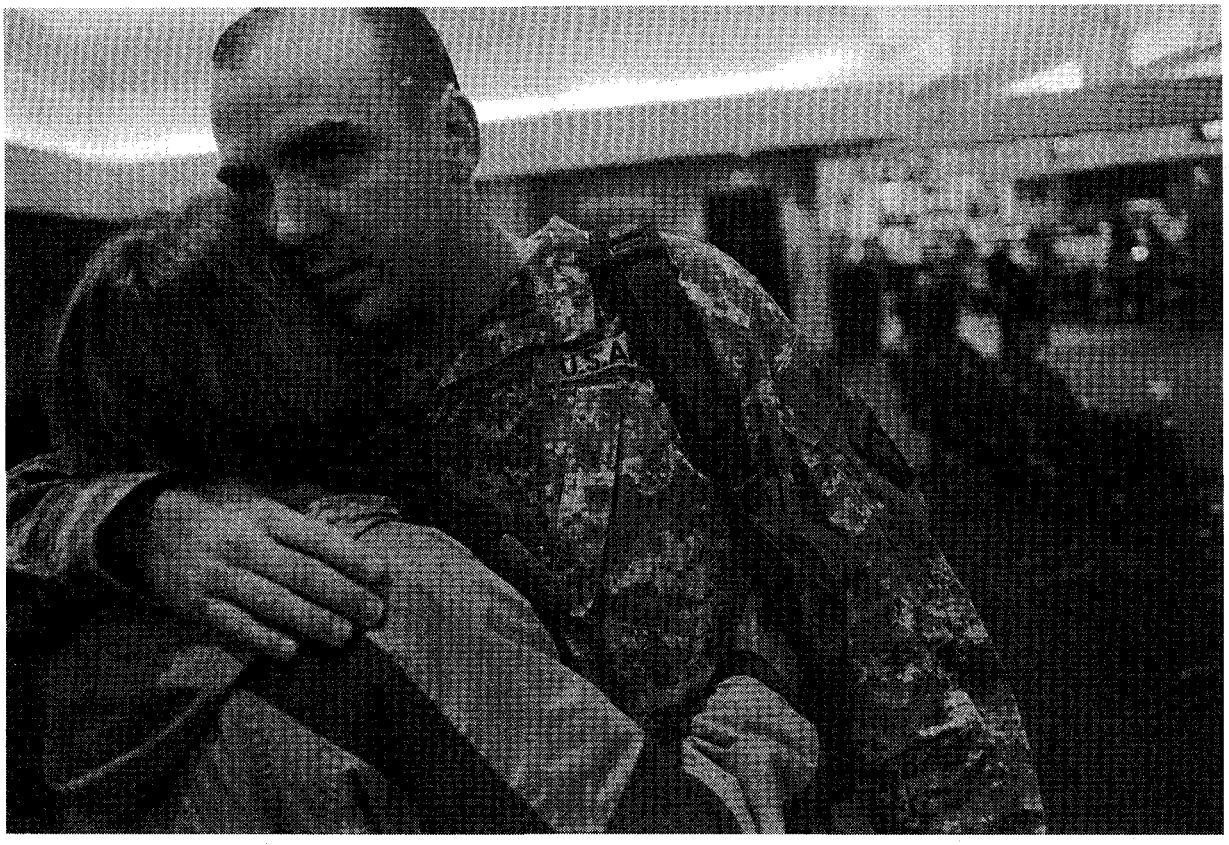

Photographs and interview by Eugene Richards

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(Continued From Page 19)

It appears that zero tolerance is on its way to zero funding.

New York State was one of sixteen states to receive zero-tolerance funding in 2004 for its Department of Corrections. Its $1 million federal grant was matched by another $1 million from state and local sources. Some of this money was supposed to help pay for risk assessment, screening and separating vulnerable inmates from potential predators. But in the end, the vast majority of the $2 million has been earmarked for surveillance cameras in the Albion Correctional Facility for Women, and in New York City Department of Corrections facilities.

PREA also authorized a small amount, $5 million a year, to educate and train corrections officers across the country. By fiscal years 2005 and 2006, as the momentum for prison-rape reform continued to fizzle, the annual appropriation for training had dipped to just $1 million each year—a true drop in the bucket.

In one state, at least, there are encouraging signs that reform is possible. Last September, after California legislators heard testimony from Parsell and others, the State Assembly passed a law requiring the Department of Corrections to provide inmates with handbooks on sexual assault; adopt practices that will separate vulnerable prisoners from sexual predators; collect accurate data and make it publicly available; and bring rape-crisis services into prisons. The legislation also created a state office to "ensure confidential reporting and impartial resolution of sexual abuse complaints." Other states have begun to take steps, says Katherine Hall-Martinez, co-executive director of Stop Prison Rape, "but no state has been as quick and aggressive as California." Still, even the California law doesn't include penalties for prison administrators.

In 2002, twenty-four years after he was raped at Riverside, T.J. Parsell walked into a Midtown Manhattan video store and found the sales assistants laughing at an episode of the TV series *Oz*, in which an inmate is raped. "The guys could have taken out a little knife and just poked me in the gut," Parsell says. The experience led him to become an activist, and ultimately to write a book about his experiences. *Fish: A Memoir of a Boy in a Man's Prison* is scheduled to be published this fall.

"Men are supposed to be resilient," says Dr. Richard Gartner, former president of Male Survivor, an advocacy group for sexual-abuse survivors. When a man has been raped, Gartner says, "It doesn't seem to matter how old he is, how strong he is; that's still somewhere in the back of his mind—that he's allowed this to happen, that he's a sissy, that you're feminized in some way or it means you're gay."

In short, society teaches men that they are not supposed to be victims, which makes it extraordinarily difficult for rape survivors to deal with what's happened to them. For five years after his release from Riverside, Parsell was a case study, his life a downward spiral of booze, drugs and risky sex. It was only after he saw his brother nearly die from a heroin overdose, and he realized that he could be next, that he decided to get sober.

Ultimately, Parsell has fared better than most. Now 45, he did well in the dot-com boom, has a long-term partner and lives on a tree-lined street in the picturesque coastal town of Sag Harbor, New York. His study looks out over a pool that, when we spoke last fall, was sprinkled with golden leaves. Propped on the windowpane is a small, framed photograph of Parsell as a young boy with a cheeky grin.

"I'm very lucky to have transcended these experiences," he says. "Each time I tell the story, the sting goes off it that much more. But sometimes my inner kid gets really scared, and I just look up and say, It's OK, I've gotcha." It's a long way from the horrors of Riverside Correctional. But sometimes, Parsell says, he still wakes up at night in a cold sweat, crying. It feels like all the air has been sucked out of the room. ■

IN RECENT DECADES A NEW FORM OF LEGALIZED SKIN-COLOR SUBJUGATION HAS ARISEN.

Drug Busts = Jim Crow

IRA GLASSER

I was born in 1938, grew up on the working-class, immigrant streets of East Flatbush in Brooklyn during World War II, and came to political consciousness during the postwar years. As children, we were told that World War II was a war fought against racism, against the idea that a whole class of people could be separated, subjugated and even murdered because of their race or religion. But back home in the United States, racial separation and subjugation remained entrenched by law in the Deep South and by custom nearly everywhere else.

RYAN INZANA

This moral contradiction between what America said it stood for and the way it was actually organized was largely unrecognized by the American public as World War II drew to a close. The first major postwar event that challenged this contradiction and made it unavoidable was the coming of Jackie Robinson to the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947. It engaged people, including children, in a drama of racial integration, and it created what may have been the first racially integrated public accommodation—at Ebbets Field, where the Dodgers played. The following year President Harry Truman issued an executive order desegregating the armed forces. In 1950 *Brown v. Board of Education* was filed, signaling the start

Ira Glasser, the retired head of the American Civil Liberties Union, is president of the board of the Drug Policy Alliance. This article is adapted from a speech he gave to the Correctional Association of New York.

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of the modern civil rights era. Four years later a surprisingly unanimous Supreme Court struck down legally enforced racial separation in public schools, and seventeen months after that, Rosa Parks refused to give her seat to a white man on a Montgomery, Alabama, bus. Nine years later, after countless protests, marches, sit-ins and freedom rides, as well as murders and beatings of civil rights workers, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed, outlawing racial discrimination in public accommodations, employment and education. A year later the Voting Rights Act of 1965 outlawed racial discrimination in voting, and three years after that, the Fair Housing Act of 1968 outlawed racial discrimination in the purchase and rental of homes. By 1968 the legal infrastructure of Jim Crow subjugation had been destroyed and a new legal infrastructure of federal civil rights enforcement was erected in its place. America had, for the first time, abolished legalized racial discrimination and replaced it with a system of formal legal equality.

Despite patterns of racial targeting, liberals have failed to see drug prohibition as a civil rights problem of racial discrimination.

As it turned out, actual equality of opportunity did not follow automatically, easily or quickly from legal equality. But over the succeeding decades it has been assumed that at the very least, no legalized racial discrimination remains, and certainly no new forms of legalized skin-color subjugation have arisen. This is true, with one substantial exception: the system of drug prohibition and its enforcement, which is the major, and still insufficiently recognized, civil rights issue of our day.

In the late 1960s, at the peak of the civil rights movement, there were fewer than 200,000 people in state and federal prisons for all criminal offenses; by 2004 there were over 1.4 million. Another 700,000-plus in local jails brought the total to 2.2 million. This explosion of incarceration has been heavily due to nonviolent drug offenses—mostly possession and petty sales, not involving guns or violence—resulting from the exponential escalation of the "war on drugs," beginning in 1968 and accelerating again after 1980.

Since 1980 drug arrests have tripled, to 1.6 million annually—nearly half for marijuana, 88 percent of those for possession, not sale or manufacture. Since 1980 the proportion of all state prisoners who are in for drug offenses increased from 6 percent to 21 percent. Since 1980 the proportion of all federal prisoners who are in for drug offenses increased from 25 percent to 57 percent.

At the same time, the racial disparity of arrests, convictions and imprisonment for these offenses has become pronounced. According to federal statistics gathered by the Sentencing Project, only 13 percent of monthly drug users of all illegal drugs—defined as those who use a drug at least once a month on a regular basis—are black, about their proportion of the population. But 37 percent of drug-offense arrests are black; 53 percent of convictions are black; and 67 percent of all people imprisoned for drug offenses are black. Adding in Latinos, about 22 percent of all monthly drug users are black or Latino, but 80 percent of people in prison for drug offenses are black or Latino. Even in presumptively liberal New York State, 92 percent of all inmates who are there for drug offenses are black or Latino.

The fact that so many people arrested, convicted and imprisoned for drug offenses are black or Latino is not because they are mostly the ones doing the crime; it is because they are mostly the ones being targeted. This is not a phenomenon of the Deep South. It is nationwide. And it is not accidental. As the racial profiling scandals a few years ago showed, blacks are disproportionately targeted while driving cars on the highway; for example, in a lawsuit challenging this practice, it was revealed that although only 17 percent of drivers on a stretch of I-95 in Maryland were black, 73 percent of all the cars stopped and searched for drugs were driven by blacks. Nor was this an isolated example. In Florida blacks were seventy-five times more likely than whites to be stopped and searched for drugs while driving. And it turned out that these racially targeted stops were the explicit result of a Drug Enforcement Administration program begun in 1986, called Operation Pipeline, that "trained" 27,000 state troopers in forty-eight states to spot cars that might contain drugs. Most of the cars spotted were driven by blacks. And this happened even though three-quarters of monthly drug users are white!

Similar statistics show that blacks and Latinos are also disproportionately stopped and frisked on the street and disproportionately singled out for body searches at customs points—two-thirds in both cases. The huge majority of these searches are fruitless. In New York City during the late 1990s, eight of nine recorded street frisks did not result in a conviction; in the customs searches, during the same period, 96 percent of the body searches turned up nothing.This shows two things: first, that there was no evidentiary basis for the stops and, second, that there is a comprehensive practice, if not policy, of selecting targets by skin color.

Despite these patterns of racial targeting, it has not been fashionable among liberals to see drug prohibition as a massive civil rights problem of racial discrimination. Perhaps it would be easier if we examined the way racially targeted drug-war incarceration has damaged the right to vote, a right quintessentially part of the rights we thought we had won in the 1960s with the demise of Jim Crow laws.

Until recently (there have been some changes in the past few years in some states), every state but two barred felons from voting—some permanently, some in a way that allowed, theoretically but often not as a practical matter, for the restoration of voting rights. Because of the explosion of incarceration driven by drug prohibition, more than 5 million people are now barred from voting. The United States is the only industrial democracy that does this. And the origin of most of these laws—no surprise—is the post-Reconstruction period after slavery was abolished. Felony disenfranchisement laws, like poll taxes and literacy tests, were historically part of the system that arose after slavery to bar blacks from exercising equal rights and, in particular, equal voting rights. Felony disenfranchisement laws were, to a large extent, part of a replacement system for subjugating blacks after slavery was abolished.

If you want to contemplate what this means, consider the state of Florida in the 2000 presidential election, where 200,000 black

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Floridians were barred from voting because of prior felonies in an election in which the presidency was determined by 537 disputed votes. If even one-third of these people had actually voted—say, 70,000—and if they voted in the usual proportions that blacks vote for the Democratic candidate—say, 80 percent, probably a low estimate—those 70,000 voters would have produced a 42,000 net gain for Al Gore.

This is a dramatic example, but hardly unique. A 2002 study in the *American Sociological Review* concluded that John Tower would never have been elected to the US Senate from Texas in 1978 but for racially disproportionate felony disenfranchisement; that John Warner for the same reason wouldn't have been elected in 1978 from Virginia; and that despite the apparent rise in conservative Republican voting, the Senate would have remained under Democratic control every year between 1984 and 2003 if former felons had been allowed to vote. Indeed, if the same degree of racially disparate felony disenfranchisement that exists now had existed in 1960, Richard Nixon might well have defeated John F. Kennedy.

The kicker for all this is that all these black citizens who were disproportionately targeted for arrest and incarceration and then barred from voting are nonetheless counted as citizens for the purpose of determining how many Congressional seats and how many electoral votes states have. During slavery, three-fifths of the number of slaves were similarly counted by the slave states, even though slaves were not in any way members of the civil polity. This is worse. In the states of the Deep South, 30 percent of all black men are barred from voting because of felony convictions, but all of them are counted to determine Congressional representation and Electoral College votes. If one wants to wonder why the South is so solidly white, Republican and arch-conservative, one need look no further.

The fact is, just as Jim Crow laws were a successor system to slavery, so drug prohibition has been a successor to Jim Crow laws in targeting blacks, removing them from civil society and then denying them the right to vote while using their bodies to enhance white political power. Drug prohibition is now the last significant instance of legalized racial discrimination in America.

That many liberals have been at best timid in opposing the drug war and at worst accomplices to its continued escalation is, in light of the racial politics of drug prohibition, a special outrage. It is also politically self-destructive, serving to keep in power white conservatives opposed to everything liberals stand for. Liberals especially, therefore, need to consider attacking the premises upon which this edifice of racial subjugation is based. If they do not, who will? ■

LETTERS
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)

purpose and that of the industry as a whole.

The International Peace Operations Association (IPOA), far from Scahill's negative characterization, was founded to make international peace and stability operations successful, and we believe strongly in a fair, ethical and open industry. All our member companies (which include logistics firms, medical companies, security outfits and aviation service providers) are required to adhere to a Code of Conduct that dictates ethical practices in every aspect of their operations, from hiring through to observance of human rights covenants. IPOA, along with its member companies, is currently in the process of solidifying an enforcement mechanism to address violations of its Code of Conduct. Furthermore, IPOA members have designed this process to involve multiple stakeholders, including humanitarian organizations and NGOs. The industry is unique in that it is consistently advocating for appropriate government oversight and working toward greater self-regulation.

The company singled out in the article has been a leading proponent of increased regulation, accountability and transparency, which undoubtedly is good for any industry. While we agree with Scahill's basic sentiments, his article's factual content, tone and slant demonstrate just how misinformed many industry critics are. We encourage Scahill to contact us prior to writing about IPOA in the future. IPOA is in the business of peace, because peace matters.

J. J. MESSNER
International Peace Operations Association

GREEN CITIES—WAY OVERDUE

San Francisco

■ Your May 29 editorial "For a Sane Energy Policy" demonstrates that along with most of the left, you don't get it any more than those in the center or on the right. The answer to oil addiction is not higher CAFE standards, so-called alternative fuels or hybrid cars. The answer is building cities that revolve around people walking, taking public transportation and bicycling. Yes, way down in the editorial you throw in "smart growth," but the emphasis is on maintaining auto-domination and making it supposedly work better.

First, alternative fuels will not solve the problem. Scientists at UC Berkeley have stated that it takes more energy to produce ethanol than is gotten from it. Palm plantations for bio-fuel are already replacing rainforests in Indonesia. Alternative fuels just create more environmental problems.

Second, society's reliance on the automobile creates a culture of death. More than 1 million people are killed each year in car accidents (and add millions more killed by smog created largely by cars). Then there is the death of our cities. A city was traditionally a place where people on foot could spontaneously encounter one another. The car culture has largely destroyed this. We need to return to cities oriented around people, not cars. MITCHELL NEAR

Munich, Germany

■ Please don't forget that one of the Reagan Administration's highest priorities upon taking office in 1981 was the repeal of the Alternative Energy Tax Credit (and in case anyone missed the point, he ordered the solar panels removed from the White House roof). Overnight, financing for alternative-energy research was drowned in the oil industry's bathtub. We could have been twenty-five years further down the road to a sane energy policy had those red-state heroes been thwarted in their cynical collusion with the oil industry.

JOHN BROWNER

SPLAT

Brooklyn, NY

■ When I hear that George W. Bush wants to spread democracy across the world, I can't help thinking of the pigeon I saw spread across the road on my way to work this morning.

LAWRENCE KING

THE ASSASSINATOR

Brooklyn, NY

■ Foul wraith besheathed w' cloak o' doom a-slither worm thru ebon gloom. Pale skull be-circ'ed w' blazing thorn mock mercy-free the wake'ning morn. What spectre this? What blight o' Man? Hey, wait a sec. It's Coulter (Ann).

JAY WINER

A TOWN LIKE ALICE

■ Roberto Lovato, in "Voices of a New *Movimiento*" [June 19], quotes an activist who mentions a suburb of Milwaukee called "South Alice." The suburb is West Allis.

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

The Plot Against America

JONATHAN SHAININ

TERRORIST.
By John Updike.
Knopf. 310 pp. $24.95.

"Although good novelists don't deliberately seek out trends," Jonathan Franzen wrote in a famous *Harper's* essay in 1996, "they do feel a responsibility to dramatize important issues of the day, and they now confront a culture in which almost all of the issues are burned out almost all of the time." Franzen's anguished *cri de coeur* over the impending obsolescence of the novel bemoaned the ephemerality of an age of "apathy and distractions" along with the shallowness of its preoccupations. A decade later the novel may be no more relevant, but the naïve prosperity and endless leisure of the post–cold war era are a hazy memory. "The writer who wants to tell a story about society that's true not just in 1996 but in 1997 as well," he fretted, "finds herself at a loss for solid cultural referents." It's a problem we might be glad to have back, since the writer in 2006 confronts a culture whose pious obsession with 2001 shows no signs of waning. Chin-stroking op-eds by the dozen uselessly ponder our readiness to endure each month's new terror-themed movie or novel, even as our roiling anxieties are reliably spun into gold by those who transmute terror into entertainment. Our fear of terrorists, it seems, is exceeded only by our desire to watch them on television.

The latest work of jihadi-lit comes from John Updike, who turns in his twenty-second novel to a subject that has produced, in a few short years, even more books than he has. Lifted from the headlines like an episode of *Law & Order*, *Terrorist* tells the story of young Ahmad Ashmawy Mulloy, the 18-year-old offspring of an Irish-American mother and an Egyptian exchange student, a union that left him, Updike reminds us three times, with "dun-colored" skin, along with a yearning for his absent father. Alienated from his peers and neglected by his pseudo-bohemian mother, Teresa, a nurse's aide who devotes her attention to mediocre suitors and the production of oversized abstract paintings, he turns to Islam at age 11: "He thought he might find in this religion a trace of the handsome father who had receded at the moment his memories were beginning." He falls under the sway of the Yemeni Shaikh Rashid, the imam of a tiny downtown mosque; this hotbed of radical Islam appears to have one student, Ahmad, and, so far as can be detected, no other congregants.

His twice-weekly Koran lessons with Shaikh Rashid have made Ahmad a model of piety, "a good Muslim, in a world that mocks faith," sleepwalking through his depressed New Jersey city with Allah as his co-pilot—"closer to him than his neck vein, as the Qur'an expresses it." New Prospect—like Paterson, its real-life counterpart—is "full of Arabs," although, oddly, Ahmad does not seem to know any other Muslims: "his exploration of his Islamic identity ends at the mosque." This does not prevent him from pantomiming the cant of radical Islam, if listlessly so, calmly condemning the "Zionist-dominated federal government," "Jewish and Protestant exploiters" and the American infidels who "think safety lies in accumulation of the things of this world"—reciting his lines with the rote tone of an actor playing a terrorist.

The jihad against America is no easy task for Updike's young terrorist, encircled as he is by 'infidel girls' in 'skintight hiphuggers.'

Though Ahmad abhors the sexual frankness and wanton lust permeating American society, he is attentive to the "skintight hiphuggers" of the "infidel girls," worn " low enough—less than a finger's breadth, he has estimated—to release into view the topmost fringe of their pubic curls." His classmate Joryleen Grant teases him flirtatiously; he resists her entreaties,

Jonathan Shainin is the editor, with Roane Carey, of The Other Israel *(New Press).*

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though he cannot help noticing the way "the tops of her breasts push up like great blisters in the scoop neck of the indecent top" and picturing "her smooth body, darker than caramel but paler than chocolate." His interest in her "cocoa-brown roundnesses" (with which Updike, who cannot introduce a woman without extending the same courtesy to her breasts, seems similarly smitten) does earn him a few small humiliations at the hands of her thug boyfriend, the improbably named Tylenol Jones (his mother, Updike tells us in a giddy moment of soft bigotry, "saw the name in a television commercial for painkiller and liked the sound of it").

So life at Central High, not surprisingly, holds little interest for Ahmad; nor is he excited to graduate into "an imperialist economic system rigged in favor of rich Christians." Indeed, as he guilelessly tells his inattentive guidance counselor, despite his apparent lack of interest in world affairs, "The American way is the way of infidels. It is headed for a terrible doom." Jack Levy, the "old and tired, baggy-eyed" counselor, an "unhappy Jew," hardly bats an eye at this declaration. Levy is rather intrigued by the evidently intelligent young man with the curious parentage, but his attention comes too late: Ahmad explains in their first meeting that he has already decided to skip college, at the urging of Shaikh Rashid, in order to earn a commercial truck driver's license, a declaration that will surely be accompanied, in the inevitable movie based on *Terrorist*, by a swelling of ominous music.

From this point, the plot moves along with the slack predictability of a screenplay. Shaikh Rashid gets Ahmad a job driving a truck for a Lebanese-owned furniture store, and Charlie Chehab, the scion of this discount ottoman empire, accompanies Ahmad on his deliveries. Charlie talks a lot; sometimes like Updike, expressing a burning desire to direct television commercials (which Updike has called "the aesthetic marvels of our age"), delivering a panting monologue about "my idea of absolute pussy," as embodied by a woman in a Levitra ad with "the *per*fect mouth for cocksucking." Charlie also has an unusually thorough knowledge of local Revolutionary War sites and a curious Islamist admiration for George Washington, whom he terms "the Ho Chi Minh of his day." Washington's "insurgency," in fact, has "much to teach our jihad," Charlie adds conspiratorially.

Ahmad's thirst for infidel blood, however, is less than evident. Charlie takes Ahmad one afternoon to gaze across the Hudson at the spot where the World Trade Center stood; when Ahmad, not yet convinced, avers that he "pitied" the men and women who jumped to their deaths, Charlie notes grimly that "those people worked in finance, furthering the interests of the American empire, the empire that sustains Israel and inflicts death every day on Palestinians and Chechnyans, Afghans and Iraqis."

Ahmad is subject to the ultimate indignity: not just living among the imperialist infidels but attending high school with them.

But one day Ahmad delivers an ottoman to some Arabic-speaking men at the Jersey shore, and after skulking in the bushes to spy through a window, sees them extract "quantities of green American currency" from its innards—an awkward way to transfer funds, all things considered. He asks Charlie, "Is there a plan developing?" and finds himself rather abruptly—this would appear to be only their third such conversation—a foot soldier in the clash of civilizations, drafted to pilot a truck packed with ammonium nitrate, "twice what McVeigh had," into the Lincoln Tunnel, the pawn in an invisible plot whose details are as obscure to him as they are to the reader. Though the radicalization of a young Muslim in a novel called *Terrorist* can hardly come as a surprise, Ahmad's evolution from believer to jihadist happens so swiftly, and so imperceptibly, that even he doesn't realize it. "You have expressed a willingness to die for jihad," Shaikh Rashid tells him, announcing the plot to deliver "a mighty blow" to the Americans. "I did?" he replies.

Guidance counselor Jack Levy, meanwhile, makes his own improbable move, into the bed of Ahmad's mother. The two meet twice after Jack takes an interest in Ahmad, and suddenly she's "impaling herself on his erection." While Jack shares his "firm, stout, importunate stalk" with Teresa, his own wife, Beth, "a whale of a woman giving off too much heat through her blubber," stews at home, chatting on the phone with her sister Hermione—the assistant to the Secretary of Homeland Security, a tidy coincidence that enables the occasional dramatic cut to Washington.

The secretary, who says things like "I love this damn country so much I can't imagine why anybody would want to bring it down," is wracked with anxiety over ominous "chatter" indicating a looming attack in the Northeast, worries that Hermione eagerly conveys to Beth via telephone. "Do you remember you mentioned this young Arab-American Jack had taken such an interest in," Hermione asks with alarm one afternoon, who "had gotten a license to drive a truck because the imam at his mosque had asked him to?" And so the strands become one: Ahmad, en route to paradise, his truck bomb aimed squarely at "Satan's heart," is intercepted at a street corner by Jack, who set out—on foot!—to derail the terrorist plot when the FBI could not. Jack, naturally, climbs aboard, and the kid and the old man—the Arab and the Jew—following in the footsteps of our great big-screen interracial buddy teams, pilot the lethal weapon fearlessly onward toward death.

Terrorist is not Updike's first attempt at "post–September 11" fiction; indeed, he may have been the first major writer to borrow a little moral gravity from the collapse of the World Trade Center, dropping Mohamed Atta into a short story four years before Martin Amis's turgid account of Atta's constipation appeared in a recent issue of *The New Yorker*. Updike's story, knowingly titled "Varieties of Religious Experience," begins and ends with Dan Kellogg, a visitor to New York who watches the towers fall from Brooklyn Heights, just as Updike did. (The first tower crumbles "as abruptly as a girl letting fall her silken gown.") "There is no God," he thinks as he watches the catastrophe unfold, a reaction that was probably Updike's own, just like Kellogg's aborted plan to visit a Wayne Theibaud retrospective at the Whitney. Updike concatenates his own experience of the fateful day with that of a soon-to-be dead man phoning his wife in New Jersey from his smoke-filled office on one of the buildings' top floors; an older woman aboard United 93; and, finally, Atta himself, a week earlier, blending into "this unclean society" by throwing back Scotches at a Florida strip club with fellow hijacker Nawaf al-Hazmi, muttering to himself like a cartoon terrorist about whores and sluts and infidels.

September 11, in this telling, is a crucible of faith (if a sentimental one); Dan Kellogg is stripped of it while Mohamed Atta finds its affirmation in self-immolation. That Updike should view terrorism through the lens of religion should come as no surprise; faith for him is a far more interesting subject of inquiry than politics. "How gorgeously strange the

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religions of others seem!" he marvels in his 1989 memoir *Self-Consciousness*, with particular curiosity about Muslims, "the world's outstanding believers these days." "What forms has God taken in their heads," he wonders. "What does Allah mean to them as they surge forward in their Iranian human waves or Palestinian suicide missions?"

Terrorist is Updike's attempt, in his editor's words, "to get inside the skin of a young person drawn to this kind of suicidal attack," while Updike himself has explained in interviews that he wanted to portray "a sympathetic terrorist," to try to understand the situation "from the terrorist's point of view." These pre-publication remarks earned him the ire of right-wing bloggers and columnists, and many of them—the sort who filled their refrigerators with havarti to avenge the Islamic assault on Denmark—will undoubtedly judge Updike deviant from the dictates of "moral clarity," guilty of the unpardonable sin of *dhimmitude*.

But his sympathetic portrayal of Ahmad is less a political problem than an aesthetic one. Ahmad is infected with Updike's renowned mildness; he pities the infidels instead of hating them, and his desultory condemnations of America lack all conviction. "Your mother used to tell me how you couldn't bear to step on a bug," Jack says to Ahmad, and indeed, he takes care at one point to gently flip over a beetle he finds in a parking lot, struggling on its back with its legs in the air. He even thanks his mother "for putting up with me all these years" before heading off to meet his death—could you ask for a nicer boy?

Setting aside the novel's many implausibilities, the real trouble lies with Ahmad, whose piety quite literally defies belief. Swaddled in a display of Updike's Islamic learning, Ahmad wears his religion like those talismanic shirts, covered in intricately scripted verses of the Koran, that Muslim warriors once donned to shield themselves from harm. Updike is a gifted mimic and a diligent researcher; he captures the tone of jihadi talk and its convoluted hermeneutics, and the text is riddled with ostentatious nuggets of italicized Arabic, as in a superfluous bit of discourse on the distinction between *al-lugha al-fusha*, classical Arabic, and *al-lugha al'ammiyya*, the spoken tongue. Updike is never shy about demonstrating his erudition and, ever the schoolteacher's son, he has certainly done his homework. But homework, as schoolteachers can attest, rarely makes for good reading. Our sympathy for Ahmad is purchased at the cost of verisimilitude; if there are sympathetic terrorists, they exist in the eyes of those who share their aims. But Updike, for all his Salafi mimicry, cannot convince us that Ahmad hates the Great Satan any more than Updike himself does. The pundits and scholars fight among themselves about the causes of Islamic terrorism, assigning blame to religious fundamentalism, Arab humiliation or American perfidy, but in every account the terrorists are fueled by a rage that Ahmad does not possess.

Ahmad's Islamic fervor is like a compilation of the Koran's greatest hits, many of which appeared in Updike's 1978 novel The Coup.

Cynthia Ozick once complained that Henry Bech, Updike's Jewish novelist, was less a Jew than a machine for Jewish references, a "Christian posing as Jew," with a Yiddish vocabulary limited to *shiksa*, *putz* and *zaftig*. "Beware," she wrote, "of any character requiring more sociology than imagination." Ahmad's fervent Islam appears to be little more than a compilation of the Koran's greatest hits, many of which appeared almost thirty years ago in Updike's odd and brilliant novel *The Coup*. That book's narrator, a prolix Islamic Marxist African strongman named Hakim Félix Elleloû, sounds a lot like Ahmad when he calls America "that fountainhead of obscenity and glut," and takes comfort, just like Ahmad, in the Koran's declaration that "God is closer to a man than the vein in his neck."

Elleloû's Islamic Marxism, however, was an invention from whole cloth, a giddy transmogrification of Third World anti-American patter, black Muslim piety and postcolonial anger; *The Coup* is surely among a very small set of Updike's books capable of provoking outright laughter. Elleloû narrates his own life, vacillating—he too shares too much of Updike's self-consciousness—between the first and third person, from his exile in the South of France, remaking *Pale Fire* as African farce. In the evolution from Elleloû to Ahmad, however, Marx moves in reverse—what then was farce is now tragedy, and as Ozick warned, sociology has overtaken Updike's imagination. Elleloû's misbegotten fanaticism is feverish but hilarious, whereas Ahmad's is simply limp, a patchwork quilt sewn from yesterday's newsmagazines, stuffed with too much information, perhaps because, as Elleloû laments, "great fanatics can no longer arise; they are swamped by distraction."

Though Updike is no moralist, *Terrorist* suggests he believes that understanding terrorism and sympathizing with its perpetrators go hand in hand, an equation he attempts to reverse-engineer. To deepen our understanding of "the problem of our time," as he has described terrorism, it must first be made sympathetic; to do so, Updike casts Ahmad's religion in the mold of his own. What convulses Ahmad is not the power of his faith but his fear of losing it, his anguish at the inadequate evidence of Allah's presence in the fallen world and his fear that America—or what Updike elsewhere called "the incandescent power of these manufactured visions"—will strip him of what he holds dearest. His angst is existential; with no evidence of a life after this one, he fears "his own death will be...small and final." He cannot stomach his Shaikh's suggestion that "these visionary descriptions" of hellfire and paradise in the Koran are "figurative"—"Paradise," he protests, "must be real, a real place."

Because Ahmad's faith is anxious, he is sensitive to any signs of wavering around him; he "could always sense his teacher's doubts, since it was important to him that there not be any." In this he sounds less like Mohamed Atta than David Kern, the teenaged version of Updike in the short story "Pigeon Feathers," who is devastated by his discovery of unbelief and dismayed by the incomplete faith of the adults who surround him. Told by his minister that the soul persists after death sort of like how "the goodness Abraham Lincoln did lives after him," "tears of outrage" come to his eyes. Where Ahmad "has taken to searching television for traces of God in this infidel society," David takes comfort in the sight of clergymen, "the sermon topics posted outside churches" and "cartoons in magazines showing angels or devils." David's high school is full of "sexy, perfumed people, wisecracking, chewing gum, all of them doomed to die, and none of them noticing," while Ahmad thinks that the halls of Central High "smell of perfume and bodily exhalations, of chewing gum and impure cafeteria food," and sneers at his classmates as they "strut and saunter along and look dead-eyed, indicating with their edgy killer gestures and careless scornful laughs that this world is all there is."

David's flagging faith is restored, as every high school student knows, when he is dispatched to kill a flock of pigeons fouling the

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family's old furniture in the barn; touched with remorse, he contemplates the intricate design of the dead birds. "The God who had lavished such craft upon these worthless birds," David concludes with certainty, "would not destroy His whole Creation."

Ahmad is prepared to deal with death on a far grander scale, with Jack riding shotgun and twenty-five barrels of fertilizer and racing fuel bringing up the rear. He is pushed to the cusp of suicide not by the blind certainty of religious fanaticism but rather by its opposite, a doubter's need to prove that God exists. Updike has endowed Ahmad with his own Barthian theology, with God as "Wholly Other," untouchable and unknowable, utterly separate from man. "We cannot reach Him," Updike wrote, glossing Karl Barth in 1963; "only He can reach us." "When I turn to Allah and try to think of Him," Ahmad confides to Joryleen, "it is borne in upon me how alone He is, in all the starry space He has willed into existence.... At times I have this yearning to join God, to alleviate His loneliness." To die for jihad is to bring himself face to face with Allah, to obliterate his uncertainty about his existence. "An icy trickle high in his abdomen reaches his bowels" as he steers the truck toward New York, "at the thought of meeting the other self, as close as a vein in his neck, that he has always felt beside him."

But as the truck tiptoes in the traffic, stuttering toward oblivion, and Ahmad tells Jack about Sayyid Qutb and Jack tells Ahmad, "I fucked your mother," our existential terrorist sheds the urge to murder he barely possessed to begin with. He loses God in a breath and finds him again, just as David Kern did, somewhere in the abundant splendor and geometric intricacies of the visible: "The pattern of the wall tiles and of the exhaust-darkened tiles of the ceiling—countless receding repetitions of squares like giant graph paper rolled into a third dimension—explodes outward in Ahmad's mind's eye in the gigantic fiat of Creation, one concentric wave after another, each pushing the other farther and farther out from the initial point of nothingness, God having willed the great transition from non-being to being." "God does not want to destroy," Ahmad realizes suddenly; "it was He who made the world."

Easy come, easy go! We stare ever so briefly into the black heart of murderous evil and then, well, it's gone, and not a moment too soon. Updike's picture of America in the age of terrorism is a bleak one; all is not well in what Rabbit Angstrom not so long ago called "the happiest fucking country the world has ever seen." But the book's unpleasant depiction of a soulless, materialist, hedonistic America—whether it is Updike's vision or that of Ahmad or Jack—has only the barest residue of September 11. There is talk of the Twin Towers, and we have a Secretary of Homeland Security, but no nationalist ardor, domestic repression or inflated fear. Teresa tells Jack at one point that she had to disconnect the phone because she and Ahmad received anti-Arab "hate calls" after September 11, which is pretty strange considering that her last name is Mulloy.

American culture, by contrast, is saturated in information about September 11 and the era it names, an accumulation of details in newspapers, magazines, books and movies. As literary subjects go, terrorism possesses an enviable gravitas, but it is ubiquitous to the point of banality: The novelist must surely wonder what remains to be said, yet the compulsion to say something apparently cannot be suppressed, particularly if you are a prolific author addicted to writing.

So rather than pondering the legitimacy of these fictions of September 11, we might more profitably ask, Why are they so bad? The novelist in the age of information wants to compete on the terms of the culture that threatens to make him obsolete, to answer information with more information. *Terrorist*, glutted with its fragments of Arabic, its consummately pretty descriptions of everything under the sun, filled with Ahmad's halfhearted parodies of speeches by Ayman al-Zawahiri, is all information, and it withholds from the reader the critical contribution fiction might make to our understanding: what it feels like to murder for God, to strike with righteous vengeance against the enemies of the *umma*. It is a phenomenological leap that Updike appears incapable of making, and judging from most of the books and films that have recently strapped bombs to their protagonists, he is not alone in his inability to do so. But it is hard to resist the conclusion that Updike, for his part, has not tried very hard, passing off research—more and more information—as a counterfeit for experience.

Reviewing Salman Rushdie less than a year ago, Updike praised him for writing "fiction that animates Islam's tenacious rage with faces and life stories." *Terrorist* is a golem cobbled together from such raw material: It walks and talks like its namesake but remains stubbornly inanimate, devoid of passion or fury. If only all our terrorists were so harmless. ■

The Passion of Anna

ELIF BATUMAN

ANNA OF ALL THE RUSSIAS: The Life of Anna Akhmatova.
By Elaine Feinstein. Knopf. 331 pp. $27.50.

In 1906, a 17-year-old girl named Anna Andreyevna Gorenko told her father, a Ukrainian naval engineer, of her literary aspirations. Faced with the prospect of having a "decadent poetess" in the family, he implored her not to dishonor his name. So she began writing poetry as Anna Akhmatova. The pseudonym stuck.

In later life, Akhmatova wrote a four-line poem called "Name": "Dense, Tatar, / It came out of nowhere, / Sticking to any possible misfortune, / It is itself a misfortune." Throughout her career, this self-styled Cassandra predicted horrible disasters, and the disasters really happened; she was pursued in life by the themes from her poetry. But she also had a kind of "white magic," an eye for concrete detail, and an indefatigable interest in life and in other people. These gifts protected her from melodrama, made her a great poet and earned her many friends.

During the Writers' Congress of 1959, Akhmatova was visited in her room at the Metropole Hotel by a strange woman who had come to present her apologies. Not only was this woman's name also Akhmatova, but she too wrote poetry, albeit in Ossetian. Anna received her double graciously and "chatted happily" with her for hours. "The two Akhmatovas got on very well," Nadezhda Mandelstam recalled, "and when her namesake had left, Anna Andreyevna said sadly: 'She's a genuine Akhmatova and I am not.'"

"The two Akhmatovas got on very well":

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Indeed, Anna Akhmatova got along with everybody. In her old age a thyroid condition made her "catastrophically fat" and destroyed all traces of her youthful beauty; still she was surrounded to the end of her days by young admirers, including Joseph Brodsky. In the words of Nadezhda Mandelstam: "Hordes of women and battalions of men of the most widely differing ages can testify to her great gift for friendship, to a love of mischief which never deserted her even in her declining years, to the way in which, sitting at a table with vodka and *zakuski*, she could be so funny that everybody fell off their chairs from laughter."

Nadezhda Mandelstam's description could not be more different from Akhmatova's public persona. She was an icon: Cleopatran, tubercular, glamorous, her adopted name inseparable from her image. Everyone knew her high cheekbones and slightly hooded eyes, photographed by Moses Nappelbaum; everyone knew the drawings by Amedeo Modigliani, with their Egyptian simplicity. In the words of her friend and biographer Lydia Chukovskaya, Akhmatova was chiseled by her fate into "a statue of grief, loneliness, pride, courage."

A beautiful poetess writes unhappy love poems about her unhappy love affairs, becomes a symbol of suffering, lives through the Revolution and the Stalinist terror, "repents," abandons her frivolous love poems, takes on big historical subjects, becomes an icon of not just her own suffering but the suffering of her people: This is the received story of Akhmatova's life, a flat before/after trajectory from the aesthetic (and bad) to the ethical (and good). In her disappointing new biography, *Anna of All the Russias*, Elaine Feinstein basically retells this story, approvingly noting "the transformation of the 'gay little sinner'...into the voice of a whole people's suffering." (Like most of Akhmatova's biographers, Feinstein is also prone to lapse into the unproductive discourses of Soviet-era biographical criticism: Was Akhmatova "only" a bourgeois love poet, or did she have a historical conscience?) It is a fable that does justice neither to Akhmatova's life, with its complexity and change, nor to her richly layered work, with its synthesis of superstition, religion and prophecy, of Greek drama and the Russian novel, of fairy-tale schematism and everyday specificity.

In 1912 Akhmatova published her first book, *Evening*, and became famous overnight. Her critics immediately divided into polarized camps that would remain intact throughout her career. Many reproached her for her "decadence" and bourgeois domestic subjects—and in fact, some of her early lyrics are a bit too easy to hear in the voice of Marlene Dietrich ("Don't kiss me, I'm tired—/Death will kiss me"; "Oh, how handsome you are, damn you!"). But there were marvels, too. The poet Marina Tsvetaeva surrendered her heart to Akhmatova on the basis of a couplet: "I pulled onto my right hand/The left-hand glove."

As a child Akhmatova had been obsessed with Alexander Blok and the French Symbolists. But in 1911 she, her husband, Nikolia Gumilyov, and a third poet, Osip Mandelstam, were at the forefront of a literary movement called Acmeism, in reaction to that dominant school of Symbolism. Symbolism was based on the mystical theosophy of Vladimir Solovyov and on a mysterious "other world" that could only be unlocked with the keys of poetry: musicality, polysemy and, of course, Symbolism. Mandelstam once objected that the Symbolists found nothing "interesting in itself": The dove was there to symbolize a girl, the girl to symbolize a dove. By contrast, the Acmeists demanded a return to clarity, specificity, the concrete. In one of the first Acmeist poems, "The Giraffe," Gumilyov writes of a giraffe who wanders around Lake Chad. The giraffe doesn't unlock a magic door to another world; its very existence is the magic, proof that reality is vast and marvelous. The poem addresses a depressed Russian woman, possibly Akhmatova herself: "You have breathed in the heavy fog for too long," he tells her. "You don't want to believe in anything but the rain."

Akhmatova once said that "the poet works with the very same words that people use to invite each other to tea." For the Acmeists, poetry was part of the real world, as real as an invitation to tea. In Symbolism, the secret to the universe can't be accessed without the key; in Acmeism, the secret is itself the sum of all the keys.

Akhmatova and Gumilyov's union had always been dramatic—in the unhappy years before their marriage, when she spurned his many proposals, he twice tried to kill himself. In 1912, two years after they finally married, their son Lev was born; he would be raised primarily by Gumilyov's mother in the countryside. After eight years of an open marriage and multiple extramarital affairs, the Gumilyovs divorced in 1918. Akhmatova married a diffident Assyrologist, Vladimir Shileiko, from whom she separated a few years later. In 1925 she became deeply involved with the art critic Nikolai Punin and moved into his apartment, where his wife and daughter also lived. Akhmatova and Punin shared the bedroom for thirteen years, after

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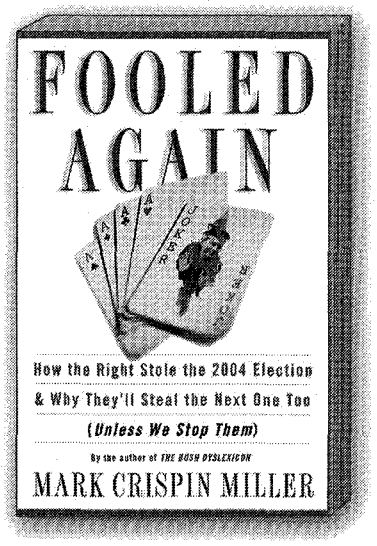
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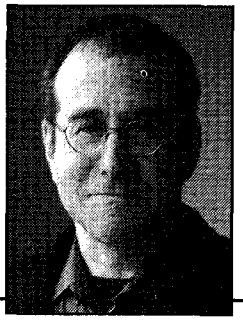

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which she asked Punin's wife to "exchange rooms"; she continued to live in the apartment even after she became involved with her next lover.

In the 1930s Lev came to Petersburg to complete his studies; he lived on and off with the Punins. In 1935 he was arrested for no apparent reason and released a month later, after Akhmatova and Boris Pasternak wrote letters to Stalin on his behalf. Lev was arrested again in 1938 and sentenced to five years in Siberia, where he worked in a copper mine, studied geology and nursed bitter grudges against his mother. During his exile, war broke out and he was sent to the front. In 1940 Akhmatova suffered her first heart attack.

The following autumn she was exiled to Tashkent, where she lived for three years with Nadezhda Mandelstam and read poetry in hospitals. She returned to Leningrad in 1944; when Lev was demobilized in 1945, he rejoined her at the Punins'.

That winter, Akhmatova received several visits from the young Isaiah Berlin. While Berlin was at Akhmatova's apartment, his Oxford undergraduate classmate Randolph Churchill (Winston's son) turned up in the courtyard and started yelling up at the window. Churchill, stationed in Leningrad as a journalist, had heard that his old friend was in town and tracked him to Akhmatova's residence, hoping that Berlin could accompany him to his hotel and translate a request to the staff involving some caviar and an icebox. In later years, Berlin was embarrassed by Akhmatova's conviction that "by the mere fact of [their] meeting," they had "started the cold war and thereby changed the history of mankind." But Stalin's paranoid imaginative genius really did make much of this episode. Within days of Berlin's departure, the NKVD came to Akhmatova's apartment and ostentatiously installed a microphone in her ceiling. In 1946 her poetry was officially banned by the Central Committee of the Communist Party; in 1949 both Punin and Lev were arrested. Hoping to improve her son's lot, Akhmatova wrote a propagandistic cycle, *In Praise of Peace* (1950). Stalin was unmoved. Only in 1956, three years after Stalin's death, was Lev released. Akhmatova died ten years later in a convalescent home near Moscow.

The received narrative of Akhmatova's life is based largely on her poem "Requiem" (1935–40), in which she portrays herself as waiting for news of Lev like Mary after the Crucifixion: "Where the silent Mother stood, there/No one glanced and no one would have dared." (The poem greatly irritated Lev, who, after all, had survived the gulag; he later remarked that it would have been better for his mother's poetry if he had been killed.) In the most frequently quoted passage, Akhmatova ruefully remembers her carefree youth: "You should have been shown, you mocker," she writes, "Gay little sinner of Tsarskoye Selo,/What would happen in your life—/How three-hundredth in line, with a parcel,/You would stand by the Kresty prison."

In their old age, Akhmatova and Mandelstam periodically engaged in a contest of suffering: Akhmatova would say that compared with her troubles, Pasternak's problems were a mere "battle of butterflies"; Mandelstam would counter that Akhmatova's problems were trivial compared with the sufferings of herself and her husband. It's bad enough when poets compete over who suffered more, but it's incomparably worse when, fifty years later, critics take up the debate. Alas, in *Anna of All the Russias*, Feinstein unabashedly argues that the value of a poem depends on how much world-historical suffering it sublimates.

Feinstein rehashes the tired comparisons between Akhmatova and Tsvetaeva, making much of the former's physical frailty and the latter's hardiness. "Unlike Akhmatova," she writes, Tsvetaeva "was able to saw wood, light fires, wash potatoes in icy water." In their own lifetimes, such comparisons had irked both poets. "I can do everything," Akhmatova archly informed Lydia Chukovskaya one evening. "And if I don't do it, it's just out of spite."

Yet for Feinstein, Akhmatova was frail and beautiful, Tsvetaeva robust and tomboyish; Akhmatova was restrained, Tsvetaeva wild. "Akhmatova kept her dignity even in the face of tragedy; Tsvetaeva showed her emotions nakedly," Feinstein writes—a statement so simplistic as to mean barely anything at all. And Feinstein contradicts it, in a discussion of *Evening*: "Although [Akhmatova] cleverly hides which man her poems were written about and may well have collapsed several figures into one, all the lyrics expose undignified emotions." It is strange enough for a biographer to accuse a lyric poet of undignified emotions; it is even stranger, given Feinstein's overall investment in Akhmatova's dignity. Worse, this observation reveals Feinstein's belief that Akhmatova's poems were all written for various men, and that her job as biographer is to determine what was written for whom—a fundamentally antagonistic exercise, an effort to "expose" what Akhmatova had been able to "cleverly hide."

Feinstein makes a pretense of scholarly evenhandedness, dropping phrases like "a biographer must acknowledge" and unconvincingly playing devil's advocate ("[These lines] could, of course, be read to imply quite unfairly that Gumilyov was himself a sadist"), all the while practicing the most tiresome form of literary analysis: Is this poem about Boris or Vladimir? Was it "composed after a marital quarrel?" Or does it tell us whether she had sex with Modigliani? At one point, unable to decide which man a given poem is based on, Feinstein concludes: "It is as if she has infused the poem with her own disappointment, and given it fictional intensity." Well, *yes*—that's what poets do.

This kind of analysis is all too typical of the genre of literary biography—as is, in my experience, her extremely poor command of rhetoric. Feinstein writes "however" when she means "moreover"; the supporting sentences do not support the topic sentences. Her syntax is so convoluted that even very short sentences require multiple readings ("In those queues the February Revolution of 1917 which deposed the Tsar was born"). Her word choice verges on the bizarre: Hitler, she writes, "ingested Austria and Czechoslovakia"; elsewhere she claims that Akhmatova "did not approve the Nietzschean idea of an elect beyond Good and Evil"—as if the thing had turned up on her desk one morning to be rubber-stamped. (Feinstein doesn't approve the Nietzschean ideal either, and describes Akhmatova and her friends as "amoral"; of the period between 1917 and 1919, she writes, "these two years of Akhmatova's life were at once frivolous and amoral.")

Akhmatova's life is fascinating material, but Feinstein doesn't seem particularly interested in it. There is scarcely anything resembling "local color": Petersburg, Moscow, the Black Sea all come across like empty stage sets. Paris, we learn, contains the Eiffel Tower, the Latin Quarter, the Ballets Russes, some fruit and vegetable stands, and Modigliani; but where is the Paris Akhmatova wrote about, the city redolent of "petrol and lilacs"? Tashkent gets barely two sentences, and yet Akhmatova had never been so watchful as during her Central Asian exile. "She notices far more than I do," Chukovskaya recorded on the train to Uzbekistan:

> She keeps pointing things out to me.... "An eagle!... It's landed on that mountain over there! Look—a river, it's yellow!"... Blue carriages of the Moscow metro, buried under the snow. Eagle-eyed Anna Andreevna pointed them out to me.

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Feinstein's description of Tashkent—"Brown-skinned women offered oriental sweetmeats and flat white loaves of bread in an eastern marketplace"—is reminiscent of the worst kind of Symbolism, with its vague exoticism and banal color scheme. Just Akhmatova's luck, I thought, to find a biographer who is a Symbolist—or perhaps one who is simply *boring*. Feinstein doesn't write a single specific sentence about Moscow, but she devotes these three to the science of Akhmatova's heart condition: "Angina is a symptom of a condition called myocardial ischemia. It occurs when the heart muscle (myocardium) does not get as much blood (hence as much oxygen) as it needs. This usually happens because one or more of the heart's arteries is narrowed or blocked."

What local color there is in this book is supplied by Feinstein's Britishness, the understatement and stiff upper lip, most evident in the descriptions of the war years. She writes that 1938 was "a long, terrible year." Hitler's invasion was "swift and merciless"; "Stalin was astonished and appalled" by the French nonresistance; "Akhmatova was altogether dispirited." British patriotism flashes through at unlikely moments. Feinstein objects, for example, to Akhmatova's description of her father's mistress as "practically a hunchback": "This was cruel and unfair, because in fact Yelena Andreyevna was an unusual woman, and attended Oxford University."

Feinstein's biography is presumably intended to replace or supplement Roberta Reeder's 1994 *Poet and Prophet*; in a pinch, I would still go for the Reeder. Reeder's account is more lucid and detailed, and her translations are more literal. To my ear, they sound better as well. It's not that Feinstein had no reason to write her book. New materials have surfaced since 1994, notably the *Moscow Memoirs* of Emma Gerstein, Lev Gumilyov's friend and lover, as well as memoirs by Vladimir Garshin and Akhmatova's friend the comic actress Faina Ranevskaya. But Feinstein's taste for dreary household squabbles, of which there was no shortage in the days of cramped communal apartments, prevents her from deriving anything interesting from these memoirs. She is too set on trying to resolve hopeless questions, like whether Lev was justified in his "passionate bitterness" toward his mother.

In closing, let us turn to the million-dollar question: Akhmatova's relationship to history. History made its grand entrance in Akhmatova's work as early as 1922, in her fifth book, *Anno Domini MCMXXI*. The first poem, "Petrograd, 1919," transposes the familiar Akhmatova fairy-tale landscape onto the topos of the Russian Civil War: "And locked in this savage capital,/We have forgotten forever/The lakes, the steppes, the towns,/And the dawn of the great motherland./Day and night in the bloody circle/A brutal languor overcomes us."

A "bloody circle" has been drawn around Petrograd, and the citizens are captive, spellbound: They have forgotten everything outside. As Gumilyov and his giraffe expanded the world beyond the fog and rain, so does Akhmatova expand the world beyond the bloody circle. In "MCMXXI," she writes of "new constellations" appearing in the skies: "How near the miraculous draws/To the dirty tumbledown huts."

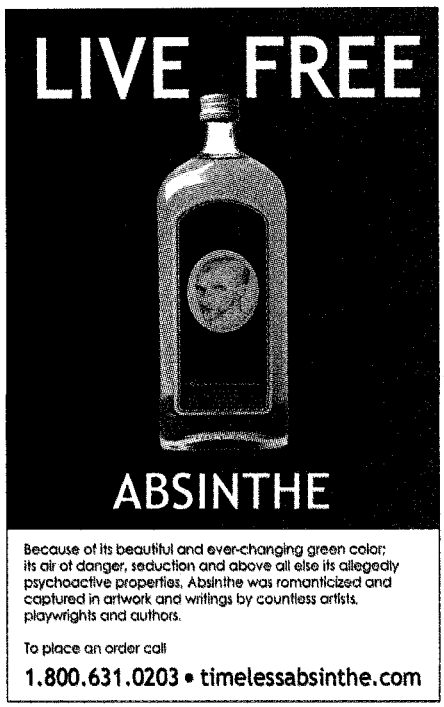
The difficulty of separating, let alone hierarchizing, the densely intertwined themes of love and history in Akhmatova's work was perhaps best expressed by the poet and critic Anatoly Naiman:

> Akhmatova believed that history made no distinction between a personal and a public event. The separation of lovers, while intensely private, is—on a wider level—part of history. From such a separation—the separation of Dido and Aeneas—Rome itself was created.

Indeed, *Anno Domini MCMXXI* is really "about" the same underlying sense of wrongness as *Evening*—the left glove on the right hand—but this time we are on the level of the city, rather than of the individual house. "A monstrous rumor roams the city," writes Akhmatova, "Stealing into houses, like a thief": The rumor turns out to be related to Bluebeard, with his secret bloody room, a variation on the theme of "Red Terror."

Akhmatova's "historically" themed poems are not a body of work separate from her love poems. As Lydia Chukovskaya wrote in 1940, Akhmatova's poetry is saturated by "awareness of oneself and one's fate within Russian culture, within the history of mankind and Russia: Pushkin, Dante, Shakespeare, Petersburg, Russia, the war"; her gift is an inability to write about love "without showing the reader, with absolute precision, the exact moment on the map of history." As poetry is, for the Acmeists, "merely" a subset of language, the poet is a subset of the world, a citizen in the world. The life of the poet—including, as lives do, love—is a subset of history.

Perhaps Akhmatova's name really was a "misfortune," a Fury that pursued her, despite her efforts to hide from it. The statuesque beauty of her person and her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verses was so often admired that she finally became a statue: "Akhmatova." In "Requiem" she grants permission for a monument to be built in her honor someday, on the condition that it stand not by the Black Sea or in Tsarskoye Selo but outside the Leningrad prison: "Here, where I stood for three hundred hours,/And where they never unbolted the doors for me." Like Don Giovanni, she got her wish. She is now frozen in memory as, to use two of Tsvetaeva's famous phrases, "Anna of all the Russias" and "a poet without history."

But in fact a web of history stretched above, below and all around Akhmatova. You don't necessarily perceive it in "Requiem," with its heavyhanded religious symbolism. But it's there in "Northern Elegies," in the reconstruction of "Dostoevsky's Russia": "The moon,/Almost a quarter hidden by the bell tower.... And magnificent coffins: 'Shumilov Senior.'" You sense it in the juxtaposition of Dostoyevsky's Petersburg with Akhmatova's Petrograd: "The country shivers, and the convict from Omsk/Understood everything, and made the sign of the cross over it all." And it's in "Poem Without a Hero," Akhmatova's masterpiece, whose narrator greets the New Year of 1941 at a masked ball, with a "Guest from the Future," representing Isaiah Berlin, and an unnamed poet, "contemporary with the Mamre oak." Surely, this is how we should remember Akhmatova: not as a statue of Mary outside the Leningrad prison but in living dialogue with the Guest from the Future, the convict from Omsk and the Mamre oak. "The box has a triple bottom," Akhmatova wrote, and it was true of her poetry as well as her life. ■

MUSIC

Brilliant Corners

DAVID YAFFE

At New York City's Birdland this past March, pianist Andrew Hill accepted *Playboy*'s Artist of the Year Award, smiled for the cameras and then, without a single announcement, spent an hour filling the room with his distinctive, slightly deteriorating brand of pianistic alienation. On the title track from his recent *Time Lines*, Hill pounded away on an F major chord while drummer Eric McPherson thudded swirling rim shots with a meandering calypso backbeat. Hill's attack definitely swung, but in a perplexing direction: Unlike Herbie Nichols, Randy Weston and other Monk-inspired pianists, Hill left fewer rhythmic and harmonic signposts, striking when you'd least expect. Perhaps aware that he was leaving listeners adrift after accepting a plaque from Hefner's empire, Hill, who never plays anyone's standards but his own, began playing the opening motif from Meyer and Caeser's 1928 "Crazy Rhythm." The drums played against the piano and the bass repeated an off-kilter Latin beat, but Tin Pan Alley was somewhere buried in the subtext:

> Crazy rhythm, here's the doorway.
> I'll go my way, you'll go your way.
> Crazy rhythm, from now on
> We're through.

Hill's playing wasn't up to his 1960s peak—it was actually rougher than on the CD—but it was better to be honored belatedly than not at all. Many rapt audience members were trying hard to follow the clangor, nodding their heads and trying to take it in. It was a clever moment, a rare nod to accessibility in an extremely opaque evening.

In a break from critical orthodoxy, I pondered the fine line between complexity and incoherence. Sometimes Hill pounded the keys with purpose. Other times, he seemed to be fumbling for the right notes. Crazy rhythm, indeed. The announcement last year that Hill had signed with Blue Note for the third time was a major event in the jazz world, but it was also bittersweet: He was battling cancer without health insurance and needed the money only a major label could offer, composing and playing furiously through his illness and treatment. But the fuss and awards surrounding Hill's recent deal were really all because of what he did during his first stint on the label beginning in 1963.

Back then, Hill was 21 and telling everyone that he was a Haitian protégé of the neoclassical composer Paul Hindemith. In fact, he was a native Chicagoan whose studies with Hindemith were more like an ad hoc correspondence course; the fledgling Hill approached the eminent composer after a performance, the two men exchanged some letters and Hindemith died the year Hill got his record deal. Hill's biographical discrepancies continued. Various sources credit him with a PhD in musicology from Colgate, but it turned out that Colgate never offered that degree to anyone. Jazz musicologist Lewis Porter did some investigation on the matter a few years ago, and a Colgate professor sent Porter an e-mail from Hill, who said that he didn't want credit for something he didn't do and added that jazz critics don't do enough of their own research and should do everything possible to stop the lie. Of course, Hill's first few years of recording are worth more than a stack of doctorates, and even if he didn't write a dissertation of his own, he certainly provides enough material for someone else's.

Is Hill a genius, a trickster or a con artist? To ask the question is to answer it: all of the above. Tall tales have long been a part of the greatest jazz legends. Who really believed that Louis Armstrong was born on July 4, 1900, or that Jelly Roll Morton invented the music? Behind the self-mythology, though, the music is even harder to unravel. Following Hill's biographical claims may be tricky, but following the transcriptions of his compositions is even more baffling, and this is a difficulty he can own. In 1963 the Beatles hadn't yet conquered America; free jazz was still relatively new and divided the lines of the Blue Note roster. Saxophonist-composer Joe Henderson was still carrying the torch for accessible swing, digging into the Latin groove that took Stan Getz to the pop charts. Multi-reedist Eric Dolphy was arguing with his leader, Charles Mingus, on the bandstand through musical dialogues, and he pushed further into the harmonic stratosphere with every transgressive wail. Tony Williams, then a 17-year-old wunderkind who had picked up a seat in Miles Davis's quintet after seeming to memorize every beat thudded by Philly Joe Jones, was unable to ignore something freer rumbling from the harmolodic territory of Ornette Coleman and the rattle of Billy Higgins's high hat. Amazingly, Henderson, Dolphy, Williams and Hill, along with trumpeter-arranger Kenny Dorham and bassist Richard Davis, all came together on March 21, 1964, to record *Point of Departure*, and in a single day Hill made a jazz masterpiece. It was his fourth album for Blue Note, and the first three, *Black Fire*, *Smokestack*

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and *Judgement*, had also been recorded in single-day sessions in the previous four months of frenetic activity. The recording would also be Dolphy's last studio session; that June, he would be dead at 36, and everything that he recorded in those last few months would be scrutinized and pondered in search of a future jazz never quite had.

Point of Departure routinely makes critics' all-time-favorite jazz album lists, but Hill's compositions are rarely played on the bandstand or heard from conservatory practice rooms. A look at the chart for "Refuge," the first track on the album, explains why. On the recording, Dorham and Hill are playing the melody, while Henderson throws in an empathetic harmony and Dolphy offers an alto dissent. Somehow, Hill's composition unites these three divergent styles, with Henderson and Dorham playing the changes and Dolphy literally going off the charts. Hill's jagged comping and peripatetic lines are anchored in a Monkian percussive hiding place, a refuge of sorts. But the chart itself offers less of one. It's harder to play than anything by Wayne Shorter, who made his own Blue Note debut the same year. Shorter, who can be heard from conservatory to conservatory and bandstand to bandstand, may have earned the nickname Mr. Weird, but his madness made a kind of divine sense; no one else could have thought of tunes like "Juju" or "Speak No Evil," but once you learn them, they are indelible. Hill doesn't let you in nearly as easily. Look at the chart, lose your place, start over and marvel at those who can do it well; improving on the album is impossible anyway. The track that followed was named by Frank Wolff "New Monastery" as a nod to Thelonious Monk, but Monk's terrain is a much less difficult path to follow. You hear Monk in Hill's attack, but the harmonic stratosphere is something more dense and even more strange. "New Monastery" wasn't Hill's title anyway. He once said that everything he ever wrote came out of a Kenny Drew blues motif he heard once—but then, Hill has said many things.

Point of Departure is confounding, but it is a text, with heads and solos followed in bop protocol, something that Dolphy's *Out to Lunch*, recorded in the previous month, defected from more dramatically. Ornette Coleman's *Live at the Golden Circle*, John Coltrane's *First Meditations* and Cecil Taylor's *Unit Structures* would stray further from the written lines. ("Where are you Bud?" wrote Taylor in the liner notes, giving a stream of consciousness shout-out to Bud Powell. Many would have answered, "Far, far away.") Hill would become more accessible on other occasions. "Catta," the lead track from vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson's extraordinary 1965 album *Dialogue*, is a Hill composition that sounds like a cousin to Joe Henderson's "Recordame," a Latin soul jazz number with a centered groove and a catchy hook. "Catta" was recorded a year and a half after Blue Note artist Lee Morgan made a crossover score with a similarly infectious Latin composition, "The Sidewinder," which hit No. 25 on the *Billboard* chart and made it all the way to a Chrysler commercial in the 1965 World Series. If Hill had written more tunes like "Catta," maybe he wouldn't have asked each reader of *Down Beat* to send him a dollar the following year; it would be four decades before *Playboy* paid its respects.

FRANCIS WOLFF © MOSAIC IMAGES

Andrew Hill in 1966 at Rudy Van Gelder's studio in New Jersey

Ironically, some of the most accessible Hill material from his first Blue Note run didn't make it out of the vault until recently. Blue Note realized it was sitting on collectors' items and belatedly released Hill's work from the end of his first run with the label. This, too, is a case of better late than never. *Passing Ships* topped many jazz critics' lists for 2003, even though it was deemed unreleaseable in 1969. The sessions that Hill recorded that year with strings are especially noteworthy: haunting, lovely, complex and without a trace of Third Stream preciousness. "Illusion," from the Mosaic Select box set, is driven by the slow,

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steady, swinging march of Mickey Roker's drums. Hill, who had jumped from chord to chord on the compositions that made his reputation, slowed down for a simpler progression. Bennie Maupin blows some tasteful tenor lines with a kind of Lester Young–inspired melodic economy, and the strings are arranged enough for chamber and loose enough for jazz; the cello tugs and takes you in deeply. The rest of the sessions are like a dream. They sound nothing like the commercially viable jazz of 1969—they might as well have been recorded in a different century from the one that produced Miles Davis's *Bitches Brew*, and it's certainly a better jazz session. But Hill never made the commercial crossover, just the counterintuitive, deft ones that spelled career suicide—until recently, that is.

Another pianist who made his Blue Note debut in the early 1960s, Herbie Hancock, was more of a playa. Like Hill, Hancock was a Chicago native who had a classical connection (he played with Rafael Kubelik and the Chicago Symphony when he was 11). But Hancock also had a Top 10 hit early on with "Watermelon Man" (not his own version, but still), and while honing an original, complex and deep pianism always had his eye on what the popular audience wanted. It would be hard to imagine Hill pitching Bose speakers or tinkling impressionistic lines behind Christina Aguilera on the Grammy Awards. Two roads diverged.

Hill spent the next three decades paying dues. In the liner notes to his *From California With Love* (Artists House, 1979), Hill wrote, "At the zenith of my Blue Note recordings, I found that fame and fortune were not my reward, but fame and poverty. This was hard to believe, for I had seen artists like Miles Davis, Maynard Ferguson, Oscar Peterson, etc., pass through Chicago. They weren't surviving but living." Yet Hill wouldn't make concessions to live a little better, and he preferred teaching in California prisons to playing on pop sessions. Even a second run for Blue Note in 1989 and 1990 didn't last beyond two albums, both regrettably out of print, and somewhere along the line his piano technique, never especially smooth, became less consistent. You weren't exactly sure if that was how he meant to hit those keys or if he missed them. But he achieved some triumphs late in his career, some wholly distinct from that initial burst of greatness from 1963 to 1967. *Dusk* (Palmetto, 2000) was originally conceived as a tribute to *Point of Departure* for a gig at New York's Knitting Factory. But the resulting CD sounded nothing like the album that inspired it. It was a musical interpretation of Jean Toomer's 1923 masterpiece *Cane*, with a title alluding to the opening stanza of Toomer's Harlem Renaissance classic:

> Her skin is like dusk on the eastern horizon.
> O cant you see it, O cant you see it,
> Her skin is like dusk on the eastern horizon...
> When the sun goes down

The CD matched *Cane* for lyricism with a sharp edge, achieving a quiet beauty the younger trickster of the 1960s didn't quite reach when frantically jumping from chord to chord and interval to interval. The title track, which opens the CD, returns to a dominant groove plucked out on Scott Colley's bass, while the horn lines travel in odd directions and Hill's piano lines give contrapuntal retorts. *A Beautiful Day* (2002) lives up to its title, even more ambitious than *Dusk* in its orchestral scope, demanding, powerful and lyrical. Hill and an audience, albeit a specialized one, could finally meet.

Time Lines doesn't quite reach the heights of those two recordings, but it has quiet and subtle powers of its own, even if they didn't make the transition from the recording studio to the stage at Birdland in March. Hill's rough beauty has inspired a generation of younger pianists like Vijay Iyer and especially Jason Moran, who combines a Hill-inspired attack with a Hancock-inspired crossover savvy, and who has identified himself as a Hill disciple, performing in deferential duets with him. But Hill's recent impact has been in the jazz compositional landscape, and his twists and turns now seem less bewildering than they did in that frenetic period forty years ago. Altoist-composer Greg Osby, who performed beautifully on Hill's first reunion sessions with Blue Note, has cited Hill as his greatest influence, and when they played together on *The Invisible Hand* (2000), it was not only a signal of Hill's return to the label where it all began but a moment when Hill seemed less like an eccentric cult figure and more like an elder statesman. On Hill's "Ashes," that CD's lead track, the chord sequences are still hard to follow, but Hill's softened accompaniment and Osby's breathy alto, complemented by guitarist Jim Hall's lush lines, make it clear that the twenty-first century will finally be a time when Hill's challenging conceptions will go down a little easier, less cryptic but as fascinating as ever. As Hill is enjoying his third act, those rhythms don't sound quite so crazy anymore. ■

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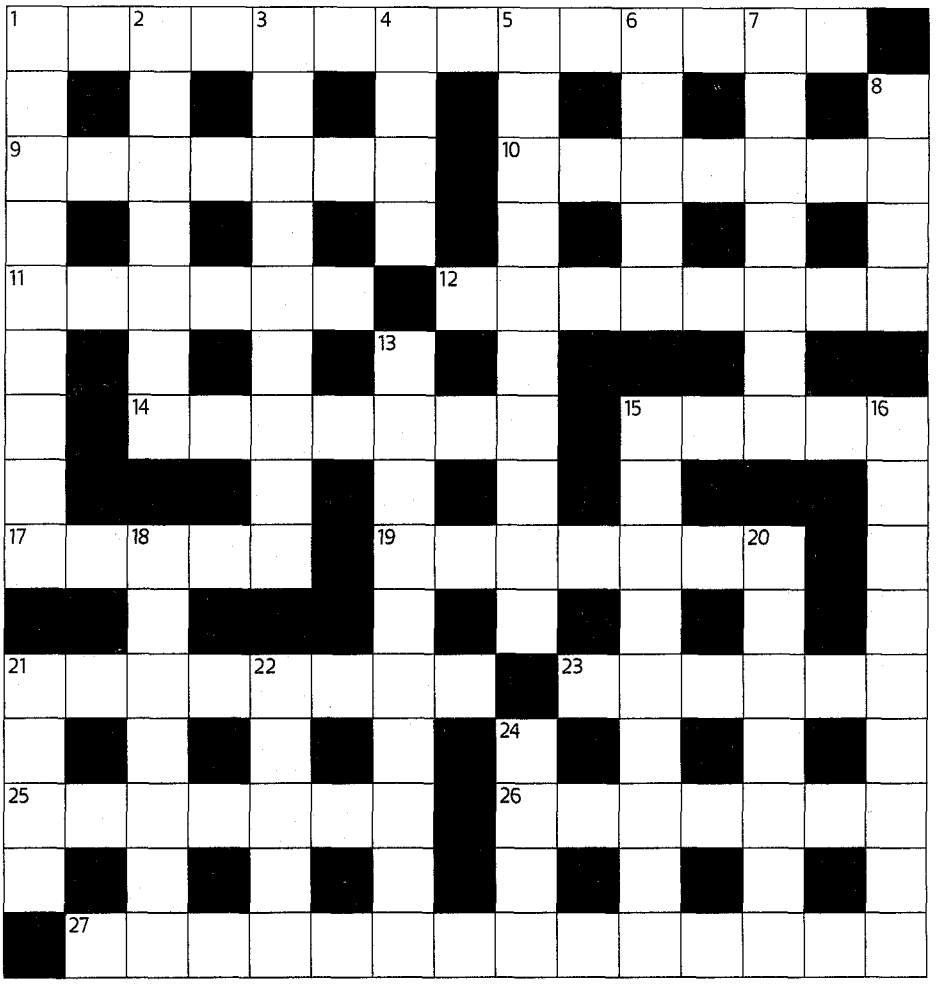

ACROSS

1 Well, one isn't! At least one always says so! (The manservant to the upper-class type takes a Middle Eastern coin to John from Scotland.) (14)

9 Highly prized? (7)

10 The capital of Washington fished for this, and maneuvered for an advantage. (7)

11 Straight-sounding, but hurried back to a bit of a fight. (6)

12 See 13 down

14 Perhaps underwear worn by the other male, obviously. (7)

15 Prepares oneself for action when the grids have to be rearranged. (5)

17 Worn in the Boers' outbreak? (5)

19 Part of the plant often drills to make it obvious. (7)

21 The man takes little notice, but a revolutionary gives one a pain! (8)

23 The Scottish novelist takes to the legal profession? Right, that is! (6)

25 Important things were written in stone here! (7)

26 Their turn supposedly is a flop. (7)

27 How Narcissus looked after a good deal of thought. (4,10)

DOWN

1 Memphis is in such a state! (9)

2 One is a little "hairy" by the sound of it, but always allowed around it. (7)

3 Merchants hope for a good deal of these, but not necessarily the apple type. (9)

4 Reputedly a dead type that has to act twice. (4)

5 Albion II? (3,7)

6 The extent of anger, possibly. (5)

7 Finished every place! (3,4)

8 Need a change? Look in the Garden. (4)

13 and **12** across A light from above is supposedly perfect for two. (1,5,4,2,6)

15 Relating to the passing of time, as a personal matter. (9)

16 His verses were of the garden variety, especially for children. (9)

18 A certain generation has to take something in—but that's the way one trounces! (5,2)

20 Folk history on what they greet you with in the islands was rocky, in a tempting way. (7)

21 If old-fashioned, list to the first of hands on the old boat. (4)

22 A sweet and gentle flower. (5)

24 Late rising, along with everything else! (2,2)

PUZZLED? No more cross words. If you don't see why "Lures" are "Ground Rules" send for those of Mr. Lewis to: Puzzled, The Nation, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003, or access our website at www.thenation.com/about/crossword.mhtml.

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3041

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C	■	I	■	R	■	C	■	L	■	R	■	E	■	E
C	A	N	T	I	N	A	■	L	A	R	I	A	T	S
U	■	N	■	F	■	T	■	W	■	O	■	U	■	I
S	H	O	O	T	■	T	H	E	■	W	O	R	K	S
E	■	W	■	■	■	E	■	L	■	■	■	N	■	T
D	O	S	S	I	E	R	■	L	O	T	U	S	E	S
■	■	■	■	C	■	■	■	■	■	W	■	■	■	■
P	R	O	V	E	R	B	■	A	P	O	S	T	L	E
O	■	N	■	■	■	R	■	N	■	■	■	R	■	N
P	E	A	C	E	■	A	N	D	■	Q	U	I	E	T
P	■	G	■	L	■	I	■	G	■	U	■	P	■	R
I	B	E	R	I	A	N	■	O	K	I	N	A	W	A
E	■	R	■	T	■	E	■	O	■	C	■	R	■	I
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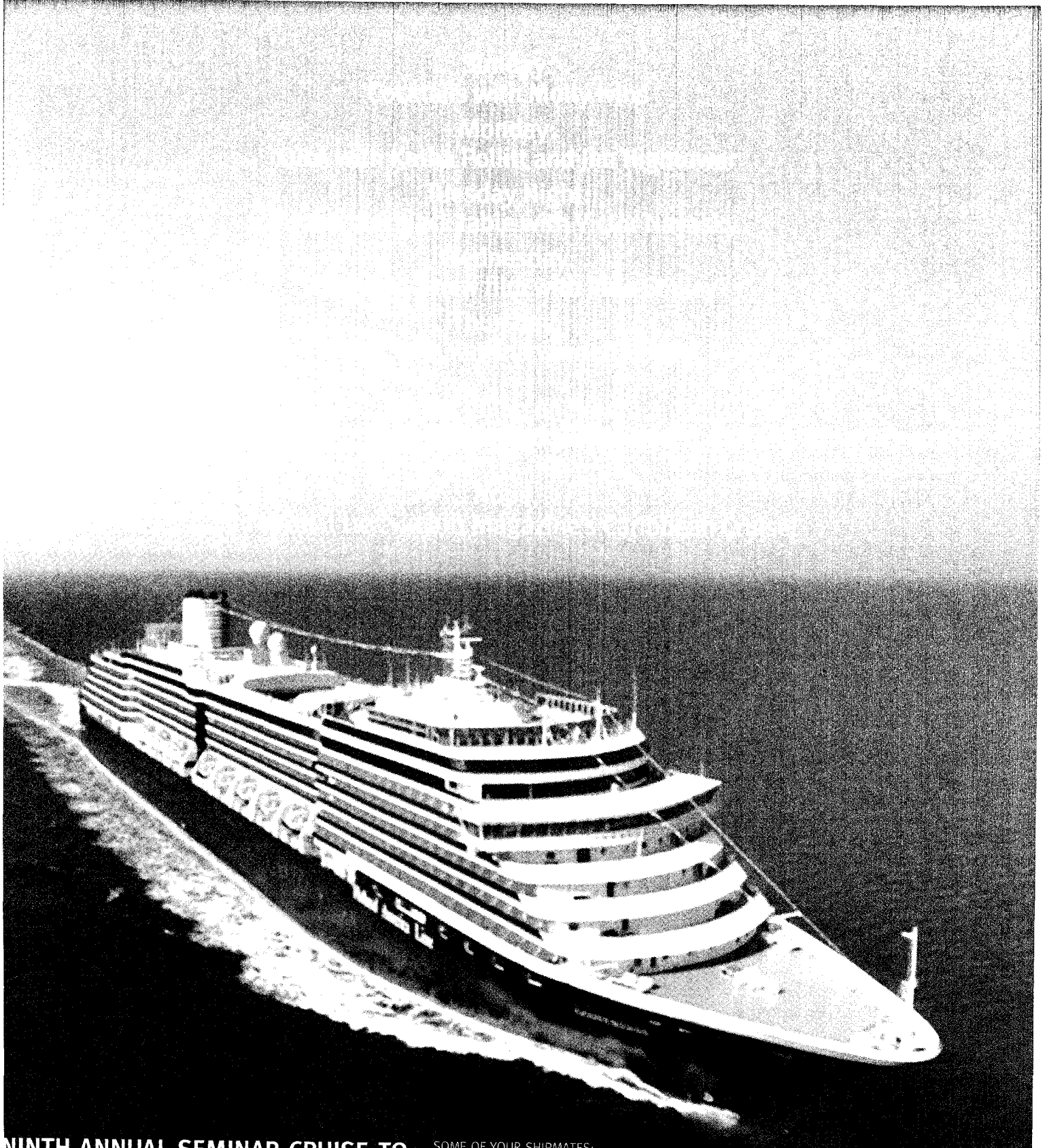

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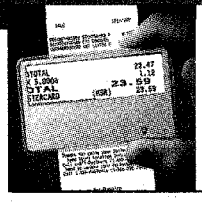

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**Source: "Lighting the Way to Energy Savings"; 1999

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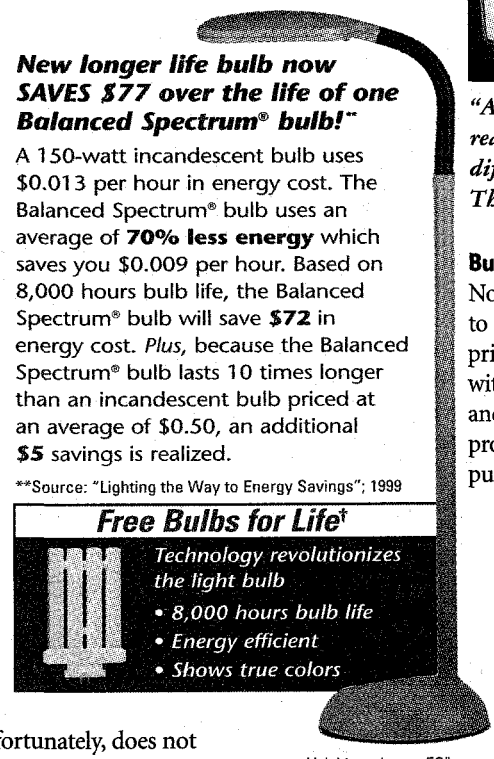

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